

Still Going Strong—Billy Bunter, the Fat Boy of Greyfriars!

The Magnet 2^d

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

**BESSIE
BUNTER
WALKS THE
PLANK!**

DON'T WAIT FOR AN INVITATION—



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HERE we are, here we are, here we are again! And everything in the garden is lovely! Flowers are blooming, and trade is booming! Good! Most important of all, however, is the fact that the MAGNET has been, and still is, booming!

That's a sure proof that everyone is getting

QUALITY AS WELL AS QUANTITY

for their money. And who can dispute the fact that for sheer quality the MAGNET is unbeatable?

One of my readers asks me what school story paper is runner-up to the MAGNET? If all questions were as easy as this one to answer, wouldn't I just smile! The answer, chum, is our splendid companion paper—the "Gem." There is no writer of school stories living to beat Mr. Martin Clifford—unless it is Mr. Frank Richards!

For twenty-nine years now the MAGNET has been called

THE LEADING SCHOOL STORY PAPER.

What a record, eh? And to think that Mr. Frank Richards has written the yarns of Harry Wharton & Co. since the very first issue, which was published February 15th, 1908. Could any other author boast of such a feat? And his yarns have been consistent, too—bright, breezy, and interesting, every one of them!

"How he keeps up the pressure is a real masterpiece," says Mrs. Walters, who claims to be one of the oldest readers of the MAGNET. "Well can I remember the first stories dealing with the arrival of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, and how the Famous Five first came to be formed. And what

A WONDERFUL TONIC

the MAGNET was in my schoolgirl days, and still is now! May the Old Paper lead the way for years to come, and may Mr. Frank Richards continue with the good work!"

Mr. Richards has asked me to thank you, Mrs. Walters, through the medium of this Chat, for the splendid tribute you pay him.

"Writing Greyfriars yarns is not work," is what our famous schoolboy author often says to me, "it's a real pleasure!"

While we're on the subject of stories, here's an item that should

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interest all "Magnetites." Brian Cooke and Roy Heaton, both of Hyde, Cheshire, have sent me a list of which they consider

THE BEST YARNS PUBLISHED

in the last two years. Here they are in the order given:

1. The "Brazilian" Series.
2. The "Valentine Compton" Series.
3. "Smithy's Christmas Holiday" Series.
4. "Johnny Bull on the Run!"
5. "Billy Bunter's Watch-chain" Series.
6. The "Circus" Series.
7. "Eric Wilmot" Series.
8. "The Man with the Glaring Eyes!"

I give you full marks for your selections, chums. What do you other fellows think?

By the way, my two Hyde chums, and others who ask the same question, our long-haired Greyfriars rhymster is none other than Dick Penfold, the Poet of the Remove!

Another ardent reader sends in what he considers the

TEN MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS.

They are:

1. Tom Redwing.
2. Harry Wharton.
3. Vernon-Smith.
4. Lord Mauleverer.
5. Hurree Singh.
6. Bob Cherry.
7. Wingate.
8. "Squiff" (S. Q. I. Field).
9. Bunter.
10. Nugent.

Strange to say, this particular chum has left out Horace Coker, who figures so prominently in this week's story, and who usually gets a good mention in the letters—especially from girl readers, and their number is legion! Still, it wouldn't do for us all to think alike, would it?

By the way, you'll be pleased to hear that Marjorie Hazeldene & Co., of Cliff House, will figure prominently in our new series, commencing next week with:

"THE FEUD WITH CLIFF HOUSE!"

When Mr. Frank Richards first discussed the plot with me I saw the makings of some real good yarns. Just you wait until you read 'em! If I'm wrong in surmising that the forthcoming series will surpass all

Mr. Frank Richards' previous successes—well, I'll eat my best Sunday topper!

As you all know, Marjorie Hazeldene & Co., those charming girls of Cliff House, have always been on the friendliest terms with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. Many have been the happy hours they have spent together. Willingly would Harry Wharton & Co. go through fire and water, if need be, for their girl chums, and sooner than lose their friendship they would one and all take a dozen lickings rolled into one! Unfortunately, however, the chums of Greyfriars have an enemy in Cecil Ponsonby, the cad of Highcliffe, who takes a great delight in venting his petty spite on Harry Wharton & Co. To cause friction between Marjorie Hazeldene & Co. and the chums of Greyfriars is Ponsonby's one great aim. And he sets about it in no uncertain fashion, with what results I leave you to find out for yourselves. That this series will prove a winner I have not the slightest doubt. Look out, then, for the opening yarn in next Saturday's MAGNET.

And now to satisfy "Magnetite," of far away Montreal, Canada, who wants to know the names of the Greyfriars Fifth Formers together with their study numbers. They are as under:

	Study No.
Blundell, George (Captain)	1
Bland, Bertram	1
Coker, Horace James (major)	4
Fitzgerald, Terrence	2
Greene, William Frederick	4
Hilton, Cedric	6
Potter, George	4
Price, Stephen	5
Smith, Edward William (major)	2
Tomlinson, Thomas	6
Wavery, Frank	3

For the benefit of Horace Faulkner, of Devon, the school colours are as follows: Greyfriars (blue and white); St. Jim's (red and white); and Highcliffe (black and white).

My postbag contained many nice letters this week, some of which contained helpful suggestions. Space will not allow me to answer them all separately in this chat, so I must content myself with a brief acknowledgment and thanks for the letters received from: H. G. (Pinner); Roger Renard (Port Elizabeth, S. Africa); Hamilton Wilson (Ontario); Lorne Henry (British Columbia); Douglas Williams (Liverpool); and many others.

By way of conclusion, let me draw your attention to the amusing yarn of the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. which appears in the "Gem." It's called: "BUNTER THE HYPNOTIST!" and it's one long laugh from first line to last. Hypnotism has got Billy Bunter under its spell; but when the Owl of the Remove tries to put the spell on others, it lands him into trouble with a capital "T"!

Don't miss this sparkling story! Ask for the "Gem" to-day!

YOUR EDITOR.

COKER *the* CONQUEROR!



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It was the first day of term at Cliff House School, as well as at Greyfriars. Bessie, apparently, had travelled as far as Lantham with brother Billy and brother Sammy. But why William George Bunter was dodging Miss Elizabeth Bunter was quite a mystery to the three Remove fellows who were forming a human screen.

However, they played up. As Miss Bunter reached them and turned on them the big spectacles that were so like Billy's three fellows raised their hats politely without moving otherwise. Behind them Bunter hardly breathed. "Seen Billy?" asked Miss Bunter.

"Billy?" repeated Harry Wharton to gain time.

"My brother Billy," said Bessie. "I'm looking for him; I've been looking for him all over the station. I'm going to smack him."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"I'm sure he came along here," said Bessie. "I saw Bob Cherry and asked him, and he said he saw Billy come this way. Have you seen him?"

"I—I saw him a few minutes ago," stammered Harry.

"So did I," agreed Nugent. "I haven't seen him since, though." Which was an exact statement of fact—as Frank Nugent had, of course, no eyes in the back of his head.

"The seefulness at the present moment is not terrific, beautiful miss," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Miss Bunter gave an angry sniff.

"I've got to find him," she said. "He owes me five bob. I'm going to smack his head and keep on smacking it till he pays up. See? He left me to pay at the buffet. Five shillings! I wondered why he asked me to have cakes; I knew when he left me to settle with the waiter. Which way did he go?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Harry Wharton. "The fat bounder—"

"The podgy pirate!" said Frank Nugent.

"The terrific toad!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Didn't you notice which way he went?" demanded Bessie Bunter. "Isn't that just like boys? Never noticing anything. Do you go about with your eyes shut?"

"Oh, no! But—"

"He's fat enough to be seen," said Bessie. "He's fatter than Sammy. I'm the only one in the family with a slim figure."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Well, I'll wait here," said Miss Bunter. "He will have to turn up for the train. It's only a few minutes now; I'll wait."

Billy Bunter barely repressed a squeak as he heard that. Bessie was not six feet away; only the human screen was between. But when the train came in that screen had to shift. Those fellows, of course, ought to have lost their train to see Bunter through, but he doubted very much whether they would; he knew only too well that it was a selfish world.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a cheery roar, and Bob Cherry came tramping up with Johnny Bull. "Here we are again! Did you see old Coker chasing his hat? I thought I'd tip it off just to let him know that the Remove were coming back. Why the dickens are you fellows standing in a row like that? Playing at Siamese triplets—or what?"

Bob stared at the three, so did Johnny Bull. Really it was rather odd to see three fellows standing in a close row,

elbows touching, packed like the front rank of a Macedonian phalanx.

"What's that game?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, nothing!" stammered Harry. "Is the train signalled?"

"Yes. Come on; we shall have to rush for places."

"Oh, you bag the seats, Bob! We—we'll wait here for a bit."

"What for?" asked the mystified Bob. "Glued to the platform—or what? Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's old Coker."

"Oh, here you are!" roared Coker of the Fifth, coming up at a charge. "You knocked my hat off, Cherry! You kicked it along the platform, Bull! I'll jolly well—"

Coker grasped Bob with one hand, Johnny with the other.

"Back up, Remove!" roared Bob.

"Rescue!" yelled Johnny Bull.

The two juniors whirled in the hefty Fifth Form man's mighty grasp. Harry Wharton and Nugent and Inky forgot Bunter on the spot. The human screen broke up, and they rushed to the rescue.

There was a sudden squeal from Miss Bunter.

"Billy!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, thus suddenly revealed.

"You were hiding behind them!" shrieked Miss Bunter. "Now—"

Billy Bunter bolted.

After him flew Bessie.

By the time Harry Wharton & Co. had flattened Horace Coker out on the platform, and pushed his necktie down the back of his neck, both the Bunters had disappeared, both going strong.

Leaving Coker of the Fifth for dead, as it were, the Famous Five rushed for the train. They rolled off for Greyfriars with a crowd of other fellows, among whom Bunter was not included. Brother Billy was still dodging Sister Bessie, and he had no leisure to bother about trains!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

First Day of Term!

"T WAS a jolly old friar of orders grey
Who founded a school when
he came this way;
And since that far date, umpteen years
ago,
Good old Greyfriars School has con-
tinued to grow."

Bob Cherry was singing.

Bob knew that he was singing, because he was doing it. His friends knew that he was singing, because they had heard Bob at it before, and he had told them what it was.

But a strange ear might never have detected it. Fellows who did not know Bob Cherry might have supposed that he was bawling, just to see how far his voice would carry.

It carried far. Stentor of old, though said to have the vocal powers of fifty men, really had nothing on Bob.

When Bob was in high spirits—as was generally the case—he often liked to express his exuberance in song. On the whole, the Co. did not object. Bob's singing had one great advantage. When he was singing he could not whistle!

On the first day of term there was generally some hurry and bustle and excitement, and not a little noise. Boxes bumped, doors banged, innumerable voices yelled greetings. Bob was only adding a little more. And if a Remove fellow could not sing on the Remove landing, Bob would have liked to know where a Remove fellow could sing. Sitting on the banisters—in a rather

precarious position strictly against all rules—Bob lifted his voice in song, and came very near lifting the roof also.

His four special chums, in a group on the landing, bore it manfully. Lord Mauleverer, coming up the Remove staircase, had been going to greet the Famous Five; but he changed his mind as Bob burst into melody, and hurried past them with a hasty nod, and disappeared up the Remove passage, and a door was heard to bang in the distance.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, put his head out of Study No. 4, and shouted "Stop that row!" and banged his door.

Bob did not, perhaps, hear him, or perhaps did not recognise the description of his vocal efforts. Anyhow, he carried on.

Peter Todd came along to the landing from Study No. 7.

"House on fire, or what?" he asked.

"Fathead!" answered Harry Wharton. "Just Bob singing."

"Whatting?" asked Peter.

"The whatfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Hazeldene came out of Study No. 2.

"Who the dickens is larking with a megaphone?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry paused a moment to give Hazel a glare. Then on he went, putting his beef into it:

"There may be a school somewhere that is our match,

But we hardly believe that there can be;

We rather think Greyfriars the best of the batch,

At the top, at the top,

Right up at the top of the tree!"

That song was very popular in the Greyfriars Remove. Everybody had heard it lots of times. Now everybody heard it again, for it was scarcely possible to be in the same building without hearing Bob.

His friends wondered whether Mr. Quelch would hear it in his study on the ground-floor—whether even the Head would hear it, over in his house. Indeed, they almost wondered whether there was anybody in the county of Kent who could not hear it.

Three fellows came out of the Fifth Form passage on to the big landing. Between that landing and the Remove landing there was a short stair, which was called the Remove staircase. Once up that staircase, a Remove man was in his own territory, and the Removites were ready to turn out like a nest of hornets at any invasion by fellows of other Forms.

Prefects of the Sixth, of course, could walk in when they liked, being great men, above common mortals. But even Sixth Form prefects walked warily in the Remove passage. It had been known for a football boot, whizzing from nowhere in particular, to catch some unpopular prefect in the neck. Loder of the Sixth had known what it was to catch a squirt of ink in that passage.

The three Fifth Form men who came out on the landing had been going down the lower stairs. But one of them stopped, stared round towards the Remove landing, and called out:

"Shut up that row there!"

It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, who gave that order. It was one of Coker's little ways to give orders to juniors just as if he was a prefect. Coker had never been able to get it into his head that he was nobody in particular. Lots of fellows had told him, but Horace did not seem to get it, some-

how. And Coker of the Fifth was not in the best of tempers now. He had been annoyed by the happenings at Lantham Junction that day.

Bob, having reached the end of the verse, paused a moment.

Coker, apparently under the impression that his orders were being obeyed, gave him a stern glare.

"That's right, stop it!" he said. "What the thump were you sitting there shouting like that for, I'd like to know?"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Bob, while his friends grinned.

"That's enough!" said Coker, frowning. "I don't want any cheek from fags! Just shut up, see?"

They roared it. Toddy, to add emphasis, stamped time to it on the old oak planks. It was terrific!

Coker turned back.

"Will you stop that row?" he roared.

The row did not stop; it intensified. It echoed through the Remove studies and the Fifth Form studies, up and down passages and staircases.

From the lower stairs a head rose into view—that of Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars School.

Singing in Hall, on the first night of term, was traditional, if not wholly melodious. Singing on stairs and landings was a matter that required the attention of a prefect. Allowances were made on the first day of term, but there

Coker smacking their heads right and left.

"Now, then——" said Coker grimly, as he snacked.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bag him!"

"Scrag him!"

Bob Cherry jumped off the banisters, and was the first to bag Coker. But his friends were not far behind. Coker had delivered three or four hefty smacks when six or seven pairs of hands were on him, and he went over.

He hit the Remove landing hard. He rolled, and raged. Potter and Greene looked on—from a distance. They did not, apparently, want any of the same. Coker, probably, did not want what he



"Seen Billy?" asked Bessie Bunter, blinking through her large spectacles at the three Greyfriars Removites. "Billy?" repeated Harry Wharton to gain time. "My brother Billy!" said Bessie. "I'm going to smack him!" Screened by the three fellows standing close together, Billy Bunter fairly quaked.

Coker turned to follow Potter and Greene down the stairs. If Coker fancied that to hear was to obey, when he issued a lofty command, he was quickly undeceived.

"Chorus, you men!" said Bob. "All together, and put your beef into it!"

"What-ho!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Go it!" said Harry Wharton.

Before Coker happened, Bob's friends had had an idea that there was row enough going on, with Bob's unaided efforts, if not a little too much. But Coker butting in changed all that. Fifth Form fatheads had to be made to understand where they got off.

Bob Cherry started on the chorus, and Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh joined in with all the force of their lungs. Peter Todd and Hazel added their voices. Two or three other Remove men joined in. It was rather like a burst of thunder.

"Good old Greyfriars, second to none! Past and present, and forty years on! Never in the cart, ever in the van, For that is the way of a Greyfriars man!"

was a limit, and the fact that Wingate had his ashplant under his arm looked as if he considered that the limit had been passed.

But nobody, for the moment, noticed Wingate. Coker's attention was concentrated on the Removites, and the attention of the Removites was concentrated on getting Coker's rag out.

"I've told you to stop that row!" bawled Coker. "Do you want me to come and stop you?"

"I say, come on, old chap!" murmured Potter. "Don't start a row with the fags, old bean!"

"Shut up, Potter!"

"Look here, Coker——" urged Greene.

"Don't jaw, Greene!"

Coker strode to the Remove staircase. The "row" was still going on—louder than ever, in fact—and Coker was going to stop it. Coker had a short way with fags when they were cheeky.

Up the Remove stair came Coker to the Remove landing, charging. The chorus met him with a deafening roar. But it stopped suddenly as Coker arrived like an escaped bull. Fellows could not shout a chorus with Horace

was getting; but he had asked for it, and he got it.

"Sit on him!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yurrrrgh!" came a wild splutter from Coker, as he struggled and heaved. "I'll—gurrgh!—I'll—wurrgh——"

"Shut up that row, Coker!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sit on him, and keep him quiet!" said Harry Wharton. "These Fifth Form men kick up too much row!"

"Squash him!"

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Coker wildly.

He gurgled into silence as his face was sat on. He disappeared from view under the Removites. Sitting or standing on Coker, they kept him quiet.

"Chorus!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker was not in a position to intervene again. Sitting and standing on him, the merry Removites burst into melody once more:

"Good old Greyfriars, second to none! Past and present, and forty years on!"
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"Stop that din at once!" came a sharp command, as Wingate of the Sixth reached the landing.

This time it was an order that had to be obeyed. Coker of the Fifth was nobody; but Wingate of the Sixth was somebody, and a very important somebody!

"Oh, my hat! Wingate!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Chuck it, you chaps!"

And there was silence—and never, perhaps, had silence seemed so golden.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Taking Care of Coker!

WINGATE of the Sixth stared at the crowd of juniors on the landing.

His ashplant was under his arm; but, to the relief of the Removites, he kept it there. "Old Wingate" was not the man to handle the ash if he could help it, especially on the first day of term. But he gave the juniors a very grim look.

"Do you know you can be heard all over the House?" he demanded.

"Hem! Think so?" asked Bob weekly.

"Mr. Prout was complaining of the noise—"

"Oh, Prouty's always worrying about something, Wingate!"

"I've a jolly good mind," said the Greyfriars captain, "to give you six all round! But—What the dickens is that you're sitting on?"

"Only Coker!"

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Wingate. "You young sweeps! Let him get up at once!"

The numerous party seated on Horace Coker got off. Wingate stared at Coker. He lay breathless, gasping. His face was crimson; he was dusty and rumpled from head to foot. With an effort, Coker sat up dizzily. He gurgled for breath.

"Urrrrggh!"

The Removites surrounded him, grinning. Wingate grinned, too. Coker had, at the moment, rather a comic aspect.

Potter and Greene came along. They took Coker by the arms and helped him to his feet. He swayed between them, spluttering.

"Yurrrggh!" gurgled Coker. "You young rotters! I'll smash the lot of you! I'll—gurrgh!—I'll spificate you! I'll—"

"Here, hold on, Coker!" exclaimed Wingate, as Horace, detaching himself from his friends, made a forward hostile movement towards the grinning Removites.

Coker stared round at him.

"What the dickens do you mean, Wingate?" he yapped.

"Exactly what I say!" answered the Greyfriars captain. "You shouldn't come up here kicking up a shindy with the juniors, Coker! Get out of it!"

"Kicking up a shindy!" repeated Coker. "Don't be an ass, Wingate! I came up here to stop those fags kicking up a shindy! They mobbed me!"

Wingate of the Sixth looked at Coker of the Fifth. Telling a prefect—especially the head prefect—not to be an ass was not a thing that could be done at Greyfriars School. Coker, being a law unto himself, often did things that couldn't be done!

"Get out of it!" said Wingate curtly.

"I'm going to thrash those cheeky fags first!"

"You're going to get off this landing, and you're going to do it at once!" explained Wingate patiently. "If you don't jump to it, Coker, I'm going to give you six on your bags—hard!"

"You're what?" ejaculated Coker. "I think I said don't be an ass, Wingate! I'll say it again, if you like! Don't be an—"

"For goodness' sake, shut up!" hissed Potter. "Come away, Coker!"

"I'm not coming yet!"

"You hear Wingate—" hissed Greene.

"Blow Wingate!" retorted Coker.

Harry Wharton & Co. ceased to chuckle. Matters were getting serious. Head prefect at Greyfriars was backed up, in the just exercise of his authority, by all the authority of the headmaster. It was impossible to "blow" the head prefect. It was still more impossible to carry on, in spite of his commands. Coker was going to do both!

A minute or two ago the Removites had been ragging Coker, as he richly deserved for his obstreperous fatheadedness. Now they were rather alarmed for him.

"Chuck it, Coker, old man!" advised Harry Wharton.

Coker did not chuck it. He came on, with clenched fists and eyes gleaming under his knitted brows.

Potter and Greene grabbed him by the arms again just in time. They jerked him back.

"Leggo!" roared Coker, struggling.

"Come away, you howling ass!" grunted Potter.

"Will you leggo, you cheeky ass?"

"No, fathead!" said Greene. "No, ass! No, idiot!"

"By gum, I'll—"

Wingate's brow had knitted, and his ashplant had slid down into his hand. The order to Coker to "Bend over!" trembled on his lips. However, as Potter and Greene jerked Coker away, he did not utter it.

Seldom, if ever, was a Fifth Form senior told to bend over like a junior. Nevertheless, such a command could be given, and, if given, it had to be obeyed. The penalty for disobedience was heavy. It meant an interview with the Head, and a caning, flogging, or expulsion, according to the view taken by the Big Beak. Coker did not think of that. Coker never thought of anything. Coker just went ahead, hunting trouble. Luckily, his friends were there to jerk him out of it.

"Take him away!" said Wingate quietly. "Coker, if I find you in the Remove quarters again to-day, I shall cane you!"

"You silly ass!" roared Coker.

"And if you give me just one more word of cheek, I shall cane you here and now!" roared Wingate, his temper failing.

"You—" began Coker.

He got no further. Potter and Greene yanked him over backwards, and the back of Coker's head tapped on the landing. They had stopped him just in time.

On his back, roaring, Coker was pulled away by his anxious friends, and he travelled on his backbone down the Remove staircase to the big landing.

Bump, bump, bump! went Coker. Clatter, clatter, clatter! went his boots.

"Will you leggo?" shrieked Coker.

"No, ass! Get him away!" gasped Potter.

"I'll smash the pair of you!" raved Coker.

"Hike him along!" panted Greene.

They "hiked" Coker along, and disappeared up the Fifth Form passage

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with him. Smiling faces watched them disappear.

Wingate tucked his ashplant under his arm again. He was glad not to have had to whop Coker of the Fifth. But Coker had been awfully near it.

"No more row here!" rapped Wingate.

The captain of Greyfriars went down the stairs, and the crowd on the Remove landing broke up.

Meanwhile, the three Fifth Formers had reached their study. It was not easy work to get Coker there. He resisted every inch of the way. Coker was hefty, and almost a match for the two of them—fortunately, not quite. They got him along the passage somehow, in spite of his strenuous resistance.

Coker's idea was that he was going to tell Wingate what he thought of him, and then proceed with the thrashing of the juniors, taking no further notice of a mere Sixth Form prefect. His friends' idea was that he wasn't. And Coker didn't! Coker reached his study, and entered the same headlong, with his loyal pals clinging to him like cats.

They pitched Coker on to the hearth-rug, and stood panting for breath. They had had to exert themselves.

"Now stay there, you ass!" gasped Potter. "Do you think we want all the fags cackling over a Fifth Form man getting six on the bags?"

Coker sat up, spluttering.

"You silly owls!" he gasped. "Think I'd let Wingate give me six? I'd knock his face through the back of his head first!"

"Oh, you born idiot!" said Greene. "Do you want to begin the term by punching a prefect? Don't you want to stay here this term?"

"Don't be a fool, Greene!"

Coker staggered to his feet.

"I'm going back, and—"

"You're staying here!" shrieked Potter.

"You'll see!" roared Coker.

Coker had been dragged head-first out of trouble. Now he was going back head-first into it—if he could.

But he couldn't. Potter and Greene barged him together, and he sat down again. Before he could rise, Potter changed the key to the outside of the study door.

"Come on, Greeney!" he said.

Coker scrambled up as the door banged and the key turned. He charged at the door, and dragged at the handle.

"Open this door!" he roared. "Think you can lock me in this study?"

Potter and Greene evidently thought so. They walked away down the passage, leaving the key turned in the outside of the lock.

For a good ten minutes Horace Coker thumped on that door, and bawled. Then he gave it up, and took a rest, which he really needed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Whack!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Scat!" said the Famous Five, with one voice.

Billy Bunter did not "scat." He rolled into Study No. 1, where the famous Co. were gathered.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were arranging their possessions—Bob Cherry was unwrapping a cake—and Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh sat on the study table, swinging their legs. None of them appeared delighted to see Bunter.

"I say, that looks a decent cake, Cherry, old man," said the fat Owl, turning his eyes, and spectacles, on it. "Jolly nearly as good as the one I was going to bring back from Bunter Court, only it got left unpacked somehow. I say, are you going to eat that cake?"

Bob stared at him.

"Oh, no!" he said sarcastically. "I'm going to stick it up on the wall in my study, to tell the time."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I mean, if you don't want that cake—"

"If I don't want it?" repeated Bob. As that large and handsome cake had been specially packed by Mrs. Cherry for her son Robert to take back to school with him, it was rather improbable that Bob did not want it!

"Yes, old chap! If you don't want it, you might let me have it!" said Bunter.

The Famous Five gazed at him. They were not surprised to see Bunter, when there was cake in the study. They fully expected him to scoff as much of that cake as he could contrive to annex. But they did not expect even Bunter to ask for the whole cake!

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter's improving! He used to be satisfied with bagging nine-tenths of a fellow's tuck. Now he wants the lot!"

"What I mean is—" began Bunter.

"Never mind what you mean, old fat frog—what I mean is, that you can have a whack in the cake, and shut up!" said Bob. "Anybody got a knife?"

"I—I say, don't cut that cake, old chap!" exclaimed Bunter hastily.

Frank Nugent sorted a bread knife out of the study cupboard. He handed it to Bob.

"Not cut it?" grinned Bob. "Like to bolt it whole? Is even your mouth big enough for that, Bunt? I know it's double width—"

"Beast! I mean—what I mean to say is, I—I'd like you to give me that cake, old chap!" said Bunter. "I say, don't be greedy, you know!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, do let a fellow speak. Don't cut the cake for a minute, Bob! Just let me explain first."

Bob suspended the knife, in sheer astonishment, over the cake. Over it he gazed at William George Bunter.

"You fellows know why I lost the train at Lantham to-day," went on Bunter. "That cat—I—I mean, my dear sister Bessie—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" snapped Bunter. "It's pretty rotten for me, I can tell you. I stood Bessie a feed at the buffet at Lantham, in my generous way, you know, quite forgetting that I hadn't any money—"

"Bet you didn't forget that Bessie had some!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Well, I don't see what girls want with a lot of pocket-money," said Bunter. "Besides, I never knew she had five bob—I never saw the pater give it to her just before we left home. I knew absolutely nothing about it. And I was jolly careful not to run it up over five bob, as she had to pay—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Then, quite unexpectedly, I found I was out of cash," went on Bunter. "So, as it luckily happened that Bessie had some, she had to square. She got stuffy about it—I don't know why. You'd think that a girl would be glad to do anything for a really affectionate and generous brother, wouldn't you?"

Instead of that, she actually got bad-tempered."

"What's that got to do with this cake?" inquired Bob.

"I'm coming to that, old chap. Bessie makes out that I owe her five bob. It's no good reasoning with a girl, as I dare say you fellows have found. I could talk till I was black in the face, and she would still make out that I owed her five bob! And they give 'em votes, when that's the sort of intelligence they've got!" said Bunter. "I say, she smacked my head at Lantham—"

"Good!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "I hope she smacked it hard!"

"She'd have smacked it again, if I hadn't got away. All over that measly five bob. That wouldn't matter so much, but she says she's coming over to see me the first half-holiday this term, for that five bob. Well, look here, you fellows, a chap can't have a girl coming smacking his head; can he?"

"More power to her elbow!" said Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"You fat villain—"

"You terrific toad—"

"Do let a fellow speak!" roared Bunter. "Look here! It will be all right if I send her the five bob. But I suppose it's no good asking you fellows to lend me five bob till my postal order comes?"

"Right on the wicket! It isn't!"

"Well, then, suppose I sent her that cake?" suggested Bunter.

"Eh?" gasped Bob Cherry. "What?"

"I mean, Bessie's fearfully keen on cake!" explained Bunter. "She's fat, and she's greedy—you'd hardly expect it, when she's my sister; but she is, you know. Well, that's a pretty decent cake, Cherry—you'd have to give at least ten bob for one like that in a shop. Bessie would be satisfied with that."

"Oh crikey!"

"She will get extra value, you see, a cake like that for five bob! I don't mind if she does. Nothing mean about me, I hope."

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

"One of you fellows can lend me a bob—that won't hurt you—to pay for the postage—see? As Bob's letting me have his cake, you can lend me the shilling, Wharton."

"Thanks!"

"And Bull or Nugent can bike down to Courtfield and post it for me," continued Bunter. "See?"

"The seefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"So that's why I want the cake, Bob, old chap! You don't mind letting me have it, in the circumstances, do you?"

"Let's have it quite clear!" said Bob. "I'm to hand you this cake, Wharton is to spring a bob for the post, and Johnny or Franky is to bike down to Courtfield to post it—to save you from having your head smacked for diddling Bessie. On the whole, I prefer you to have your head smacked."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"In fact," added Bob, "in case Bessie doesn't come over, I'll smack it myself!"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "So will I!"

"Same here!" said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific."

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter jumped to the door. "I—I say, keep off, you beasts! Look here, Cherry. If you're too jolly mean and

stingy to let me have that cake—
Wow! Keep off, you beasts!"

The fat Owl dodged out of the study. Bob Cherry kicked the door shut after him, and proceeded to carve the cake. The door opened again, cautiously, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Seat!" roared the Famous Five.

"But I—I say, you fellows, if you're too jolly mean to let me have the cake, and I suppose you are, knowing you as I do, you might let me have a whack."

"You'd like a whack?" asked Bob.

"Yes, old chap, just a whack—"

"Right-ho!" Bob Cherry grabbed up a cricket stump. "Where will you have it?"

"You silly ass," gasped Bunter, "I don't mean that sort of whack, you blithering idiot—"

"I do!" answered Bob.

"Beast!" roared Bunter, and he turned to depart—quickly.

Quick as he was, the cricket stump was quicker.

Whack!

It landed on tight trousers with a report like a pistol-shot.

"Yarooop!"

"Come back when you want another whack, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, as a fat figure did the Remove passage at about 60 m.p.h.

Billy Bunter did not come back. One whack was enough for Bunter!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Chance of a Lifetime!

"TODDY, old chap!"

"What the thump's become of those bullseyes?" grunted Peter Todd. He stared about Study No. 7 in the Remove, frowning.

"Never mind them now, Peter!" said Billy Bunter. "I say—"

"But I do mind!" yapped Peter. "I laid the bag on the table while I stepped out to speak to Russell, and when I came back— Have you scoffed those bullseyes, you fat fraud?"

"Oh, really, Peter! I hope I'm not the fellow to scoff a fellow's bullseyes," said Bunter, with dignity. "The fact is, I don't care for bullseyes! Perhaps you ate them and forgot all about it."

"Fathead!"

"Well, look here, Peter, this is rather important—more important than your mouldy bullseyes," said Bunter impatiently. "I've told you about that misunderstanding with Bessie—"

"You've told me how you diddle her, if that's what you mean!" grunted Peter, shifting various articles on the study table, in quest of those elusive bullseyes.

"That's how you'd put it, I suppose, like those cads in Study No. 1," sneered Bunter. "You've got rather a low mind, Peter, if you don't mind my mentioning it. But, look here, do listen to a fellow. I shall be short of money till my postal order comes, but I've got to settle with Bessie somehow. That stingy beast, Cherry, wouldn't let me have his cake, which would have done nicely. I—I suppose you never brought back a cake, Peter?"

"Where's those bullseyes if you haven't wolfed them?"

"I've no idea, Peter—not the foggiest. But look here, old chap, Coker of the Fifth has brought back a lot of stuff. He always does, you know. That silly old aunt of his always loads him with tuck when he comes back. He's got a hamper in his study. And look here, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,527.

old man—if a fellow raided a cake out of Coker's study to-day, it would be all right—Coker couldn't do a thing."

"I fancy he would, whether he could or not!" grinned Peter.

"Well, it would mean six from a perfect if he did!" said Bunter astutely. "Lots of fellows heard Wingate say that if he found Coker in the Remove quarters again to-day, he would give him six. See?"

"Oh!" said Peter Todd. He ceased his quest for the missing bullseyes for a moment to stare at his fat study-mate.

"So, you see, it's safe as houses!" urged Bunter. "It would serve Coker right to bag his tuck—look at the way he throws his weight about. It's really up to us, in a way, to teach the brute a lesson, see? Well, you can't hit a chap harder than by snaffling his tuck, what? What are you grinning at, Peter? Blessed if I see anything to grin at!"

"Look in the glass!" suggested Peter.

"Beast! I mean my idea is this, old chap. You cut along to the Fifth—"

"I can see myself doing it!"

"And bag that hamper, or as much of it as you can carry," pursued Bunter.

"We pick out something for Bessie, and have the rest ourselves. Coker can't do anything, even if he gets after us, because Wingate's going to whop him if he butts into the Remove again. This is a chance that ought not to be lost, Peter. It won't happen again, you know! It's the chance of a lifetime, really."

"If I don't find those bullseyes—"

"For goodness' sake, give a fellow a rest about your measly bullseyes. I say, Peter, I'll come with you as far as the corner of the Fifth Form passage. If I see anybody coming, I'll—"

"Bolt?"

"No!" roared Bunter. "I'll give you the tip, see? What about it, Peter?"

"Nothing about it, old fat frump! If I catch you raiding Coker's tuck, I'll jolly well boot you! But about those bullseyes—"

"Blow the bullseyes!" howled Bunter. "Bother the bullseyes! Anybody might think you fancied I'd scoffed them, you suspicious beast!"

"Looks jolly probable, to me," said Peter. "If you have—"

"I never even saw them there when I came into the study. And I dare say they're still there, only you've overlooked them. I say, Peter, think what a chance it is to rag that brute Coker, now Wingate's got an eye on him. Why, if he saw us walking the hamper off, he couldn't do a thing, once we got it across the landing! Think of that!" said Bunter temptingly.

Peter Todd, however, instead of thinking of that, continued to think of his missing bag of bullseyes. Peter seemed quite concerned about those bullseyes.

"Why, here's the bag!" he exclaimed suddenly spotting a crumpled and rather sticky paper bag in the fireplace. "You fat bloater, you've had those bullseyes—here's the bag—"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "I never threw that bag there! And I'd have thrown it out of the window if I'd known you'd go nosing into the grate after it. I say, about Coker—"

"Wait till I get hold of a cricket stump!" hissed Peter.

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him.

"You won't want that, Peter! If Coker's in his study, you can't lay into him with a cricket stump, old chap! He would yell, and bring a mob of the Fifth along."

"Oh, here it is!"

Toddy gripped the cricket stump.

"Well, that's rot!" said Bunter

peevishly. "I don't see what you want it for. Still, come on! You get on to Coker's study, and I'll wait at the end of the passage, and if anybody comes along, I'll—yoo-hooo-hoop! Yaroooh! Wharrer you hitting me with that cricket stump for, you beast?" bellowed Bunter.

Whack, whack, whack!

Bunter bounded.

"Yoo-hooo-hoop!" he roared. "Gone mad, or what? Will you keep off, you bony beast? Oh crikey! Stop it!"

"Where's those bullseyes?"

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Bunter, realising that Peter's mind was still dwelling on the missing bullseyes, and not on raiding Coker at all. "You—you—potty freak! Keep off! I never had your mouldy bullseyes! Ow! Making a fuss like this about ten bullseyes, and two of them small ones—"

Whack, whack!

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter shot out of Study No. 7. He shot into two juniors who were going up the passage. Vernon-Smith staggered in one direction, Tom Redwing in the other.

"Oh!" gasped Redwing.

"Oh gad!" stuttered the Bounder.

They sat down simultaneously.

Billy Bunter, gasping, flew on.

Peter Todd emerged from Study No. 7 flourishing the cricket stump.

"Hold on, Bunter!" he shouted. "I haven't finished yet!"

Bunter whizzed.

Bolsover major was coming along from the landing, with Skinner and Snoop. Bunter hit them like a bomb-shell. Skinner and Snoop tottered—Bolsover major went over backwards, as if a battering-ram had hit him.

"Urrrh!" gasped Bunter.

"Why, I—I—I—I—" spluttered Bolsover major, staggering to his feet. "Here, get hold of him—Skinner—Snoop—grab him—Ow!"

Bunter flew across the landing. Behind him, Bolsover major, and Skinner and Snoop came at a rush—after them, the Bounder and Redwing, and in the rear, Peter Todd, brandishing the cricket stump. Bunter gave one alarmed blink over a fat shoulder, and shot up the Fifth Form passage.

It was a case of any port in a storm!

His pursuers turned back from that passage. They did not want to wake up a row with a senior Form.

Billy Bunter, breathless, blinked back, and, seeing no pursuit, leaned on the door of a Fifth Form study to recover his breath.

It was the door of Hilton's study on which he was leaning. He could hear Hilton and Price talking inside.

The next study was Coker's. Bunter could see that Coker's door was shut, and as he blinked at it, he noted that the key was in the outside of the lock.

Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles.

In his designs on Horace Coker's tuck, he had needed Peter Todd's assistance, in case Coker was in his study. Naturally he did not want to run the risk of bearding the lion in his den.

But if Coker was not there, it was all right. If he was absolutely certain that there was nobody in the study, Bunter was bold enough to enter it, and carry on the good work on his own. When there was no danger, a lion had nothing on Bunter for courage.

He blinked cautiously up and down the passage. Not a man was in sight. Most of the Fifth were downstairs in Hall. Hilton and Price were in their study, but their door was shut. Breathing hard, Bunter crept along to Coker's door.



Horace Coker went down with a bump, and almost disappeared from view. Next moment the merry Removites burst into melody. "Stop that din at once!" came a sharp command, as Wingate of the Sixth reached the landing.

If that study was locked on the outside, the fellows it belonged to could not be at home—that seemed a cert to Bunter. And the key outside looked as if it was. It would be just like that beast Coker, to lock his study door, because he had a hamper there—and just like him again, being such a fat-head, to leave the key in the lock. Anyhow, if that door was locked, it seemed to Bunter a dead cert that the study was unoccupied.

Softly and stealthily, he turned the door-handle, and tried it. The door was locked!

That settled it, for Bunter.

He grinned with glee.

Swiftly, he unlocked the door, opened it, and darted into the study. Under the window lay a hamper with the lid open, and Bunter shot straight towards it, like an arrow, and bent over it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Limit!

HORACE COKER stared.

He stared blankly, in amazement.

Seldom or never had Coker of the Fifth been so surprised.

At intervals, for the last hour or so, Horace Coker had banged on his study door, and bawled. Neither banging nor bawling was heeded. Fifth Form men who knew where Coker was, considered him safer there. Coker might fancy that he could carry on, guided only by the wisdom that was in him, regardless of such trifles as prefects and headmasters. But, in actual fact, he couldn't; and until he calmed down, there was no doubt that a locked study door was a good thing for Coker.

He was not, however, feeling good. So far, he showed no signs whatever of calming down. He was, in fact, growing more and more intensely exasper-

ated. But he had given up banging and bawling. He realised that those proceedings would not buy him anything.

Sitting in his armchair, Coker waited, with intensifying fury, for somebody to come along and let him out.

At last, at long last, there was a sound at his door. To his great relief, it opened. To his utter amazement, a fat figure shot in, and shot across the study to the window. Coker gazed at it, dumbfounded.

Bunter, in the fixed belief that a study locked on the outside was, and must be, unoccupied, did not even blink round. The hamper was his game, and he went straight at his game, utterly unaware that Coker was there.

Coker just gazed, lost in amazement. It was not surprising, perhaps, for a grub-raiding young rascal like Bunter to barge in after that hamper. But it was simply astounding for him to do it under Coker's eyes!

For a long moment the astounded Horace sat and stared, scarcely believing the evidence of his eyes.

Bunter, bending over the open hamper, grinned ecstatically. Coker's celebrated Aunt Judy had packed that hamper well for her dear Horace. It was a large hamper—and it was full. Only two or three things had been taken out, so far. On top of other attractive things lay a large cardboard box, open, containing an immense jam tart. It was the biggest tart Bunter had ever seen. It was thick with jam! It was luscious! It was scrumptious! It was gorgeous! It made Billy Bunter's mouth water, merely to blink at it.

Coker rose to his feet.

He was behind Bunter, as the fat junior leaned over the hamper.

A stride, and he was within reach. He let out his right foot.

Thud!

A startled howl burst from Billy Bunter. Up to that moment he had not

doubted that he was alone in the study.

Under the impetus of that powerful kick, the Owl of the Remove plunged headlong forward, head-first into the hamper.

There was a squashing sound, as his fat features were buried in the big jam tart.

"Hoooooogh!" gurgled Bunter, suffocated by jam.

He leaped up, spluttering. The tart adhered to his face, stuck there by jam. Masked by a gigantic jam tart, Bunter spluttered frantically.

"Hurrgh! Wurrgh! Gurrgh!"

"You fat scoundrel!" roared Coker.

"Caught you, have I?"

"Oooooogh!" gurgled Bunter.

He clawed at pastry and jam. He blinked at Coker through jammy, sticky spectacles.

"Ooogh! Beast! Ooooh!" gurgled Bunter. "Oh crikey! I'm all jig-jig-jammy! Wooooooooh!"

He bounded away as Coker grabbed at him.

In Coker's present state of temper, he was about as safe as with a Bengal tiger in the jungle. Removites had ragged him that afternoon. Now a Removite was raiding his tuck, under his very eyes.

Coker saw red. He hurled himself at Bunter.

Bunter skipped round the table.

After him bounded Coker.

Only presence of mind saved Bunter at that awful moment. His fat brain did not often work quickly. Now, with Coker's clutch almost upon him, it did. Going round the table with the activity of a kangaroo, Coker at his heels, Bunter grabbed a chair as he passed it, and pitched it behind him.

It caught Coker's knees.

Coker pitched over it, nose-diving at the study carpet.

The yell that resounded from Horace Coker was the last sound heard.

Coker, as he went over, rang far and wide. For a moment or two, he dug into the study carpet with his nose.

That was enough for Bunter.

He was not thinking of cakes or tarts now. He was thinking only of escape.

He whirled out of the study, and ran.

Coker leaped up. He had an awful ache in his knees, and a fearful pain in his nose. He heeded neither. He charged after Bunter.

By the time he got out of the door, Bunter got out of the passage. Coker did the passage in record time after him.

Bunter tore on.

Once in the Remove, he was safe—or, at least, should have been. Six from a prefect's ash was to be Coker's reward, if he barged into the Remove quarters again that day. Wingate had said so; and Wingate was a man of his word.

But that proved, alas, a frail reed for Bunter to lean on. Coker did not even remember Wingate, and had he remembered, would not have cared a straw. He charged after Bunter.

In the Remove passage, the fat Owl stopped a moment for breath.

As he stopped, Coker hurtled up the passage, and got him.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! Leggo, you beast! Yaroooooh! Oh crikey! Help! I say, you fellows! Rescue, Remove! Yaroooo!"

Smack! Thump! Bang!

Coker got busy at once!

Smacks, bangs, and thumps fairly rang on Bunter, and louder still rang the frantic yells of the hapless Owl.

But rescue was at hand. Five or six Remove men were in the passage—six or seven more ran out of the studies. And every man hurled himself at Coker. Even Bolsover major, who had been after Bunter a quarter of an hour ago, joined in the rush. So did the Bounder and Redwing. Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh came out of Study No. 13—Johnny Bull out of Study No. 14. They raced down the passage to help. From Study No. 1 came Harry Wharton and

Frank Nugent. From other studies came other fellows.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coker again!" roared Bob.

"Scrag him!"

Billy Bunter staggered against the wall, panting for breath, and dabbing at jam, as Coker crumpled up in innumerable hands.

Coker was fighting hard. He punched and thumped wildly. He rolled and he roared. He struggled and wrenched. But a dozen or more Removites had Coker, and they handled him energetically. The cause of the trouble they had no time to inquire. A Fifth Form man was throwing his weight about in their passage. That was enough for the Remove!

The uproar was terrific.

It rang far and wide.

In the midst of it, an extremely angry Sixth Form prefect came tramping across the Remove landing, and stared into the passage.

"Stop that row!" almost shrieked Wingate. "By gum, I'll whop the whole Form! Will you stop it at once?"

He strode up the passage. He swished right and left with his ash, as he reached the spot. Hefty whacks scattered the juniors. Coker was left sitting in the passage, gasping for breath, his collar and tie gone, his hair rumpled wildly, his coat split at the tails, his face crimson.

"Coker!" gasped Wingate. He glared at him.

"Urrgh! I'll—"

Wingate's face set grimly. He had gone easy with Coker on the previous occasion. He had made allowances for Horace being the champion ass of Greyfriars. He had let him off with a warning.

That warning had been unheeded. Here was Coker again, kicking up a shindy in the Remove! That did it! There was a limit, and Coker had overstepped it; and he was for it, this time!

"You!" said

Wingate grimly. "Well, if you will have it, Coker, you will. This time you're getting it!"

"Woooooogh!" gasped Coker. He staggered up.

Wingate glanced round at the breathless juniors.

"Take a hundred lines, all round!" he said. "Hand them in before dorm to - night! Coker, follow me to my study!"

"Eh?" gasped Coker.

"Follow me at once!"

It was going to be "six" for Coker. But he was going to be spared the awful humiliation of bending over and touching his toes in the presence of a crowd of grinning juniors.

Wingate walked back to the landing. Coker, gasping, glared at the juniors. Any other fellow, told to follow the head prefect, would have followed him. Coker seemed undecided whether to recom-

mence war on the Remove. Billy Bunter had dodged into his study; and Coker was powerfully tempted to pursue him there. Even Coker, however, realised that he could not handle half the Remove at once; and he had already collected so many aches and pains that there was no great attraction in adding to the number.

Having bestowed a threatening glare on the juniors, he followed Wingate down the passage to the landing, turned the corner, and disappeared.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Go!

"THE ass!" said Potter.

"The idiot!" said Greene.

"He's got to go!"

"Oh, yes!"

"But," said Potter, "he won't!"

Greene of the Fifth did not seem to know the answer to that one. He shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

Coker's two chums were standing outside the Fifth Form games study. In that apartment, where the Fifth Form men most did congregate, was Horace Coker, with a dozen other fellows of his Form.

They were grinning; Coker was not. Coker was looking like the young man in the Alpine poem. His brow was set, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

Coker had not gone to Wingate's study, as bidden. The Greyfriars captain had been waiting for him there, in vain.

Coker was not going—not if Coker knew it. Instead of that he had gone to his own study to put himself tidy after his strenuous experiences in the Remove. Then he had strolled into the games study—where he now was.

Potter and Greene had looked in to tell him that Wingate wanted him. They told him, in vain. Now they were wondering what was going to happen.

Last term, on one exciting occasion, Coker had been "up" for a prefect's beating. He had declined to turn up for that unpleasant function. Prefects had marched him off by main force.

That, little as Coker appreciated it, was the very best thing that could have happened to him. It was not, of course, nice, but it was better than going up to the Head—especially on the first day of term when the headmaster, of course, was very busy, and had no time to waste on obstreperous fatheads who did not realise that they had to toe the line.

It would have been a relief to Potter and Greene to see two or three hefty prefects arrive for Coker. But no one came. Wingate was still waiting; and they could guess that he was growing grimmer and grimmer while he waited. He was not going to send for Coker. Coker had to toe the line, or take the consequences.

The consequences, which were fearfully serious, worried Coker's friends, but did not seem to worry Coker.

They were grinning in the games study.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, good-naturedly advised Coker to go and get it over. A glare of contempt was his reward. Blundell let it go at that. If Coker preferred an interview with Dr. Locke, he could have his choice.

Potter looked in again, almost beseechingly



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"Coker, old man—" he pleaded.
 "Come along, Coker, old chap!" urged Greene.
 "Eh? Where?" asked Coker, looking round.
 "Wingate's study—" said Coker.
 "Don't be a fool, Potter!"
 "It means going up to the Head if you don't," pleaded Greene.
 "I don't mind going up to the Head," answered Coker. "I suppose Dr. Locke's got sense enough to know that a senior can't let cheeky fags cheek him, and get away with it. I'm perfectly willing to explain to the Head."
 "Oh dear!" groaned Potter.
 "Never mind that," said Coker. "What I want to know is, whether you men here are backing me up. Those cheeky young scoundrels in the Remove have started the term worse than ever. My idea is to give them a jolly good lesson to begin with. If a dozen of you men will come along to the Remove with me, and bring cricket stumps with you, we'll give them a lesson that will last half the term. What about it?"
 "Ain't he the jolly old limit?" asked Fitzgerald of the Fifth.
 "Jevver hear of a man askin' for it like that?" inquired Hilton. "He's up for six already, and he's askin' for more."
 "Don't be a silly ass, Hilton! I'd like to see a Sixth Form swab give me six!" said Coker contemptuously. "I know I'd jolly well alter his features for him, if he tried it on!"
 "Do you happen to know," asked Price, "that a fellow gets bunked for punching a prefect?"
 "Don't be an idiot, Price! The Head would think twice about bunking a fellow like me," said Coker scornfully.
 "Why you specially?" asked Hilton.
 "Well, said Coker, "there's some fellows in every school that can't be spared. Fellows who give a tone to the place, if you know what I mean. I can hardly see the Head bunking me."
 The Fifth Form men could only gaze at Coker.
 "As for going down to Wingate," added Coker, "that's rot, and he knows it, as well as I do! Leave him to stew in his own juice—see? If he fancies he can treat me like a fag, he's got another guess coming. He's acted like a rather offensive ass; but I shall overlook it, and say no more about it, if he lets it drop."
 "Fan me, somebody!" murmured Blundell.
 "Coker here?" Bob Cherry looked in at the door. "Oh, here you are, Horace, old man! Message from Wingate—"
 "Kick that fag out!" said Coker. "You're nearest, Potter!"
 "It's a message from Wingate—" began Potter.
 "I don't want to hear it," said Coker calmly. "I've heard enough from Wingate to-day, and a little over. Get out, Cherry, before I buzz this cushion at you!"
 Coker picked up a cushion. He was seated near the window, and was not going to take the trouble to cross to the door to kick a fag out. He lifted the cushion and took aim.
 "Coker, old man—" implored Greene.
 "Do shut up, Greene!"
 Bob Cherry eyed the great Horace warily, ready to dodge the missile. As the captain of the school had sent him up with a message, he had to deliver it.

"I say, Coker, Wingate says you're to go down to his study at once—" "I've told you to get out!" said Coker.
 "If you're not there in two minutes, it goes to the Head!" said Bob. "That's the message, old bean."
 Whiz!
 The cushion flew.
 Bob dodged—unnecessarily. Coker's aim was not good. The cushion, had it travelled as far as Bob Cherry, would have missed him by a yard. But it did not travel so far, Potter of the Fifth being in the way.
 Crash!
 Potter of the Fifth, caught on the ear, sat down in the games study, with a bump and a yell.
 "Yaroo!" yelled Potter.
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"
 He departed, roaring.
 Potter of the Fifth remained where he was, also roaring.
 There was a howl of laughter in the games study.
 Potter staggered up, rubbing his head with one hand, and clutching up the cushion with the other.
 "You clumsy ass!" he roared.
 "Serve you right!" said Coker calmly. "Why didn't you kick that cheeky ass out, when I told you to?"
 Potter gave him a glare. Then he gave him the cushion. His aim was better than Coker's.
 The cushion crashed on Coker's features. He went over backwards, chair and all, with a terrific crash.
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fifth Formers.
 "Oh, oh! Ow! Oooogh!" spluttered Coker. "Why, you cheeky ass, I—I'll—I'll—" Without further explaining what he would do, Coker scrambled to his feet to do it.
 Potter hastily quitted the games study. He was gone by the time Horace resumed the perpendicular.
 Coker remained in the games study. Bob Cherry's message was, so to speak, the last time of asking. If Coker did not go, Coker had to take what was coming to him. And Horace Coker did not go—loftily and serenely regardless of what was coming to him.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Up to Bunter!

"POOR old Coker!" said Harry Wharton.
 "Poor old ass!" said Johnny Bull.
 "Potter and Greene ought to walk him off to Wingate!" said Bob Cherry. "If I had a donkey that wouldn't go I—" "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I say, you fellows, perhaps there'll be a flogging in Hall to-night!" suggested Billy Bunter brightly. "We've never had one the first day of term before."
 In the Rag, a crowd of juniors were discussing Coker of the Fifth. There were lots of topics, on the first day of term, but Coker of the Fifth had washed out all the others, for the moment. It was Coker first, and the rest nowhere.
 Most of the fellows laughed over it. Coker, though a serious fellow, very serious and very earnest, added a great deal to the gaiety of existence at Greyfriars School. Still, plenty of fellows felt sorry for poor old Coker. He was up against irresistible forces, and that fact, clear to everybody else, did not

seem to penetrate into Coker's solid brain.
 The prefectorial system had been in force at Greyfriars School from time immemorial. It had its faults and weaknesses, but, on the whole, it worked well. Specially selected members of the Sixth Form, in whom the headmaster had confidence, received powers delegated to them by the headmaster, "whopping privs" among them—otherwise, the privilege to whop!
 Sometimes a fellow like Loder of the Sixth might take undue advantage of whopping privileges. Or a hasty fellow like Walker might whop not wisely, but too well. But most, if not all, of the Sixth Form prefects fully deserved the confidence reposed in them by the headmaster, and as for the rest, fellows had to take the rough with the smooth.
 Had Coker been up against Loder, or Walker, or Carne, there might have been some remote spot of excuse for the line he was taking. But he was up against "old Wingate," who, as everybody knew, never whopped unless he felt that he had absolutely no other resource. If George Wingate, as a prefect, had a fault, it was a proneness to give culprits the benefit of the doubt and let them off too lightly. Nevertheless, he was a whale on authority, and if he did say jump, the fellows had to jump.
 Except, apparently, Coker!
 "It'll be a flogging!" remarked the Bounder. "If the Head didn't back up the prefects their game would be up. Might be the sack!"
 "We should miss Coker!" sighed Skinner. "Coker's as good as a Punch and Judy show, any day."
 "The missfulness would be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.
 "Clean, wholesome fun—that's Coker's line!" remarked Peter Todd. "Greyfriars wouldn't be the same without him!"
 "Poor old Coker!"
 "Jevver hear of a man asking for it like that, though?" chuckled Vernon-Smith. "Wingate told him what to expect if he barged into the Remove again to-day—and he comes barging in!"
 "Just like Coker!"
 "Coker all over!"
 "Yaas, it's Coker all over!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "But what was he after you for, Bunter?"
 "Oh, nothing," answered Bunter. "Just throwing his weight about—you know Coker! I never did anything. Nothing at all!"
 "He's thrown it about once too often!" grinned Skinner.
 "Yaas, but what was the nothing that you did, old fat man?" asked Mauly.
 "Oh, really, Mauly—" "You had jam all over your face when you came scudding up the passage," said Mauleverer. "Had you been after Coker's tuck?"
 "I hope I'm not the fellow to go after a fellow's tuck, Mauly."
 "The hopefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.
 "I never went anywhere near his study," said Bunter. "I never know he had a hamper, even. Toddy knows that—I told him."
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "Why, you fat villain!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If you've been grub-raiding in Coker's study—" "I haven't!" roared Bunter. "I never stepped into his study. Besides, how was I to know he was there, when the door was locked on the outside?"
 "So that was it!" exclaimed Bob. "I

remember now that fat brigand was sticky all over. Coker's jam—"

"I never touched his jam! I never had anything at all! The beast kicked me on the trousers and pitched me head-first into the hamper!" yapped Bunter indignantly. "My face went right into a big jam tart—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you can cackle, but it made me sticky and jammy all over, and I never got anything, after all. The brute jumped at me like a tiger. He would have had me if I hadn't chucked a chair at his legs!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry Wharton. "That was why Coker paid us that call in the Remove! If Wingate knew that he—"

"Don't you tell Wingate!" howled Bunter in alarm. "Why, he would give me six for going after that hamper. Might take me to Quelch. It was all Toddy's fault, too—"

"My fault?" howled Peter.

"Yes, it was," said Bunter warmly. "I asked you to go! You jolly well know I did. You let me down! That's why I went—"

"So you went to Coker's study after his tuck!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I never—"

"You've just said you did, you fat Owl."

"I—I mean that I—I didn't. That's what I really meant to say. I haven't been in the Fifth at all since we came back. I was—was in Hall when Coker caught me in his study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Making out that a fellow goes after a fellow's tuck. The sort of thing you fellows would do, I dare say!"

"I fancied it was something like that!" remarked Lord Mauleverer placidly. "It's Bunter's fault if poor old Coker is booked for the Big Beak. Wingate thought that the silly ass was just kickin' up another shindy! You'd better go and tell Wingate how it was, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Don't you see, if he knew, he would go easy with that ass Coker!" explained Mauleverer gently. "You don't want Coker up for a floggin'."

"Don't I?" said Bunter. "Pitching a fellow head-first into jam—"

"It's rough luck on old Coker!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Look here, it's a bit too rough," said Harry Wharton. "Coker's a howling ass, and a silly fathead, but if Wingate knew he was chasing a fat bloater who'd been raiding his tuck he would go easy. If he'd known that at the time he would have given Bunter six, instead of dropping on Coker. You'd better go and tell him, Bunter."

"I'll watch it!" gasped Bunter. "Think I want six, fathead?"

"It's up to you, Bunter!" said Nugent.

"Yah!"

"Play the game!" said Bob.

"The playfulness of the game is the proper caper, my esteemed Bunter."

"You silly asses!" howled Bunter. "Don't I keep on telling you that I never went into Coker's study at all, and I wasn't after his hamper, and he kicked me, and pitched me head-first into it, and smothered me with jam—"

"You don't want six from Wingate for grub-raiding?" asked Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully.

"No, I jolly well don't!" said Bunter, with emphasis.

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"Would you rather have six from an ash, or double six from a ruler?"

"Eh? Six, of course, fathead!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "Wharrer you mean?"

"I mean this," explained Lord Mauleverer. "You've got to go and put Wingate wise—that's only fair to Coker. Fair play's a jewel. If you don't we'll give you twelve with a ruler. See?"

"Why, you—you beast—"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's a ruler. Shove him across the table!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" yelled Billy Bunter. "I say, leggo! Keep that ruler away, you beast! I say—yaroooooop!"

Whack!

"Ow! Stoppit! I say, you fellows, I wasn't in Coker's study—"

Whack!

"I—I—yaroooh! I—I mean I—I'm going to Wingate! I—I—I want to go!" yelled Bunter. "I'm going to tell him all about it! I—I meant to all along, you know. Keep that ruler away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"I—I—I'm just going!" Bunter, gasping, started for the door. "You fellows stay here, and I—I'll come back and tell you what Wingate says!"

"You might miss the way to Wingate's study if you go on your own, old fat man," grinned Bob Cherry. "Let's take a walk with Bunter, you men."

"D-d-don't trouble, you fellows—"

"No trouble at all, old porpoise! Pleasure! I'll bring a ruler, in case you change your mind!"

"Beast! I mean— Look here, I'd rather go alone— Yow-ow! Keep that ruler, away, you rotter! Wow! I'm going, ain't I?" yelled Bunter.

And he went.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Coker All Over!

GEORGE WINGATE, captain of Greyfriars, was frowning deeply. Standing in the doorway of his study, in the Sixth Form passage, he looked out and knitted his brows.

He had been waiting for Coker. Coker had not come. It was unusual for a prefect—especially the head prefect—to be kept waiting, when a fellow was sent for.

Coker, certainly, was the fellow to do it, just to show how independent he was. But there was more than that to it. Coker was not merely late! He was not coming at all! And Wingate's ire was deep and strong.

He was a patient fellow—patient and good-tempered. He hated the idea of sending a man up to the Head. But there was a limit to patience. He was considering, at the moment, whether to send Coker up, or to visit the ineffable Horace in person, take him by the scruff of the neck, and whop him out of hand.

The objection to that course was that Coker was pretty certain to resist, blind as usual to consequences, and that meant making a serious matter much more serious. Exasperating ass as Coker was, the Greyfriars captain certainly did not want to see him "bunked." He did not, indeed want to whop him—but after Coker's flagrant disregard of the command to keep out of the Remove, that was unavoidable.

In doubt, Wingate was considering the matter, when a bunch of juniors came round the corner of the passage.

Billy Bunter was in advance. He did not seem to want to lead the advance—reluctance was written in every feature of his fat face. A thudding sound, as of a boot hanging on trousers, indicated why Bunter came first round the corner. He had received assistance from astern.

"Wow!" roared Bunter.

Wingate stared along the passage grimly. After Bunter appeared the Famous Five, Lord Mauleverer, Vernon-Smith, Toddy, and two or three other Remove fellows. They all seemed to be urging Bunter on.

"Quick march!" grinned Bob, flourishing a ruler.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm afraid Wingate may be rather busy now—first day of term, you know—"

"Where will you have it?"

"Boot him!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's Wingate!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly, catching sight of the Greyfriars captain in his doorway up the passage.

"Ware pre's!"

Promptly the Remove men backed behind the corner, and vanished from Wingate's sight. Only Billy Bunter remained within view. Gladly would Bunter also have backed round the corner. But there were too many boots ready for him there—not to mention a ruler.

Bunter stood where he was, blinking at Wingate.

The Sixth Form man, frowning, stepped along the passage towards him.

"What's all this about?" he rapped.

Remove ragging in the Olympian quarters of the Sixth was a thing to be put down with a heavy hand.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I was just coming to see you, Wingate! I—I mean, I wasn't coming—I—I've nothing to tell you, you know! I—I mean, I—I—I— Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter dismally.

With Wingate frowning in front, and the Removites behind, just round the corner, the fat Owl was in a state of woe and dismay.

"What do you mean, you young ass?" rapped Wingate.

"Go it, Bunter!" came a whisper round the corner—audible to Wingate as well as Bunter. "Play the game! I've got this ruler ready—"

"I—I—I say, Wingate, it—it—it's about Coker!" Bunter made up his fat mind to it. Six was better than double-six! "I—I say, I—I've come here to own up!"

"What the dickens—"

"I—I mean, Coker came after me because I—I was in his study!" mumbled Bunter. "He—he fancied I was after his tuck. Of course I wasn't; but—but he thought I was, because he saw me at the hamper. I mean, I wasn't anywhere near the hamper—"

"Will you tell me what you mean?" inquired Wingate.

"Oh, yes! That's why Coker came up the Remove passage when you caught him!" gasped Bunter. "He—he was after me, because I went to his hamper—I mean, he thought I did. And—and he was a bit waxy because I chucked the chair at his legs, you know, and he fell over it—wallop!"

A chuckle was audible round the corner.

"So—so that's why—why I—I came, Wingate. I—I thought I ought to tell you, as you're going to send Coker up to the Head. I—I've come quite of my own accord, you know—not because that beast Cherry was pitching into me with a ruler, or anything!"

Wingate grinned.

He began to understand.



Roaring and struggling, Coker was pulled away by his anxious friends, and he travelled on his backbone down the Remove staircase. Bump, bump, bump! "Will you leggo?" shrieked Coker. "No, ass!" gasped Potter. "Get him away, Greene!"

"Let's have this clear, Bunter," he said quietly. "You were snaffing tuck in Coker's study, and damaged him when he was going to collar you, and then he chased you into the Remove. Is that it?"

"Oh, no! I—I mean, yes!" gasped Bunter.

"And then all the young sweeps piled on him, I suppose," said Wingate. "So you're the cause of all the trouble, Bunter!"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "N-not at all, Wingate! The actual fact is that I never went to Coker's study at all—"

"That will do! You ought to be whopped—"

"Oh lor'!"

"But as you've come here and told me this you can cut. Get out!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "All right!" Never had a fellow been so glad to cut. Billy Bunter fairly flew round the corner, before Wingate could have time to change his mind.

The Greyfriars captain stood thinking, with a knitted brow. It was rather an awkward position. What he had just learned did not excuse Coker's reckless defiance of authority; but it was, at least, extenuating circumstances.

A senior man who caught a fag snaffing tuck in his study, and had a chair pitched at his legs when he essayed to collar that fag, might naturally get a little excited. Had Wingate been aware of those circumstances at the time, he certainly would not have ordered Coker to come to his study to take "six." Had Coker come, and explained it, it would have been all right. But Coker was too independent to come, and too fatheaded to explain.

Finally, Wingate went to the stairs and walked up to the Fifth Form games study. He looked into that apartment.

A dozen Fifth Form men were there—among them Coker.

There was a sudden hush in the room, as Wingate was seen at the door.

The seniors exchanged glances. As the mountain would not go to Mahomet, Mahomet had come to the mountain.

Coker's jaw jutted, and his eyes glinted. If Wingate had come there to administer the "six," Coker was prepared to hit out, to hit hard, and hit often. The fact that he would be turfed out of Greyfriars if he did, did not penetrate Coker's impregnable intellect.

Fortunately for him, Wingate had not come with that intention. He fixed his eyes on Horace Coker quietly.

"Just a word, Coker," he said. "I've been told something. You caught a Remove kid in your study, I understand, and went after him—"

"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Coker, staring. "What about it? I don't want a prefect to butt in. I can deal with a cheeky fag myself."

"Never mind that," said Wingate. "From what I've been told, there's some excuse for you, though you ought to have had more sense. I don't want a fellow to begin the term with a flogging, if it can be helped. I shall let you off this time—"

"Thank you for nothing!" said Coker sarcastically.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Deaf?" asked Coker.

Wingate looked at him long and hard. Coker, far from realising that he had had an awfully narrow escape, returned his gaze jauntily. The Fifth Form men stood silent. They hardly expected Wingate to take this quietly. He had come there to let Coker off, and Coker had responded by asking for

more. It seemed only reasonable to give him that for which he asked.

The Greyfriars captain drew a deep breath.

"I've said that you're let off, Coker!" he said at last. "That's that! But take my tip, and don't play the goat again!"

With that, Wingate turned and walked away. Coker laughed.

Wingate, as he went, heard that laugh, and paused. But he went on.

In the games-study, Coker grinned round at the other Fifth Formers.

"What did I tell you?" he asked. "Can you see me taking six from that ass? Ha, ha, ha!"

"You unspeakable idiot!" said Blundell, in measured tones. "If Wingate wasn't the best-tempered man at Greyfriars, you'd be for it—bad!"

"Rot!" said Coker. "You fellows kow-tow to the Sixth, if you like! Not me! I think precious little of the Sixth, I can tell you! Fat lot I care for prefects! Look here, Wingate said I was going to take six! I said I wasn't! Who was right?"

"Fathead!"

"He ordered me to his study. Did I go? No fear! He comes here and tells me I'm let off! Ha, ha!"

Coker, evidently, was in high feather. He was quite satisfied with the state of affairs.

"Of course, he had to climb down when he found that I wouldn't take any of his rot!" said Coker. "You fellows can see that, I suppose?"

Nobody could see that except Coker. Still, Coker could see it quite plainly. Coker, in high feather, went out of the games study to look for Potter and

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Greene, and tell them how Wingate had climbed down.

Coker was feeling that he had started the term well. He had put Wingate in his place, to begin with. He was ready to do it again, if necessary.

It was probable that that "six" was, after all, only deferred.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Raising the Wind!

"ANY for me?" asked Billy Bunter.

"No!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked up at the letter-rack, in morning break, anxiously through his big spectacles.

Bunter, as usual, was expecting a postal order; also, as usual, it hadn't come. Bunter looked worried.

Possibly his hope had been faint. He had been disappointed so often about a postal order that, really, he might have been getting used to it by this time. But the need of cash was more urgent than usual.

It was not merely that Mrs. Mimble, at the school shop, had a most enticing and delightful array of sticky comestibles for the new term. Bunter, for once, was not allowing his fat thoughts to dwell wholly on tuck. He was thinking of his sister Elizabeth.

Family affection was not, perhaps, strongly developed in the Bunter clan. Billy Bunter of the Remove and Sammy Bunter of the Second Form often did not see one another for a week at a time, and even then didn't want to. Neither of them very often remembered Sister Bessie over at Cliff House School. But circumstances alter cases. Billy Bunter simply had to think of Bessie now. He owed Bessie five shillings. They were five good reasons why he could not forget Bessie. He was worried about it.

A debt unpaid would not of itself have worried Bunter very much. How many shillings and half-crowns he owed up and down the Remove he could not have computed without going into very high figures. But Bessie had announced her intention of coming over to Greyfriars to collect that five shillings. Even if she did not carry out her dire threat of smacking his head in the middle of the quad, it was beastly awkward. And very likely she would. Seldom urged by his fat conscience to "square," Bunter felt that that little debt ought to be paid, if possible. It was worth five bob of anybody's money, except Bunter's, to keep Bessie away from Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter hooked on to the Famous Five as they were going out. "I say, my postal order hasn't come! It's rather rum, you chaps, isn't it? I say, what about lending me five bob?"

"Nothing about it, old fat man!" answered Bob Cherry.

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"Well, look here, don't be cads, you know!" urged Bunter. "It's rather particular. I told you that my sister Bessie makes out that I owe her five bob. It's no good arguing with a girl, as you fellows know; she's got to have it, or she'll go on making a fuss. What about a bob each?"

The Famous Five paused. Holiday funds had not yet been quite expended; they had not reached the stony state that was likely to come along later. A shilling each was not a large sum.

Harry Wharton glanced round at his friends.

"Let's!" he said. "The fat bloater ought to be boiled in oil, but we don't want a Remove man to diddle a Cliff House girl. Here you are, you fat fraud!"

Billy Bunter extended a fat and grubby paw, and the captain of the Remove dropped a shilling into it. His example was followed by the Co. Five shillings piled in the grubby paw.

"Thanks!" said Bunter. "Look here, if you could make it ten bob—"

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"What I mean is, my postal order will be for ten bob," explained Bunter. "Make it ten bob, and take the postal order when it comes—what?"

"Scat!"

"Well, if you're going to be stingy about—" said Bunter scornfully.

The chums of the Remove looked at him, looked at one another, and laughed. This was Bunter's way of expressing gratitude for a loan.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter crossly. "I never could stand meanness! You fellows really are the limit! I simply can't stand—"

"Sit down, then!" suggested Bob Cherry.

Bunter, with a helping hand from Bob, sat down quite suddenly.

The Famous Five walked on, and left him sitting.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

He scrambled up, with five shillings jingling in his pocket. He blinked in the direction of the tuckshop. The temptation was hard to resist. The thought of cream puffs and jam tarts made his mouth water.

He made a step, and paused. He made another step, and paused again. Then another step, and another pause. Really, it was like the tortures of Tantalus—only worse!

"Mauly! I say, Mauly!" He spotted Lord Mauleverer, and bore down on him. "I say, old chap, hold on a minute!"

"Oh dear!" said Mauly. He held on. "Don't tell me your postal order hasn't come, old fat bean! I've heard that one!"

"I say, Mauly, it's rather particular," said Bunter. "I wouldn't ask you in any other circumstances—I'm not a fellow to borrow money, as you know—"

"Eh?"

"But the fact is, I owe a girl at Cliff House five bob," said Bunter. "It's been worrying me a lot. A fellow doesn't like to owe a girl money, you know, and, being disappointed about a postal order—"

"You ought to be jolly well kicked!" said Mauleverer. "Can't you keep your diddling inside your own school? The fellows were booting you last term for diddling a Highcliffe man! Turn round!"

"Look here, don't be a beast, Mauly! It's only five bob, and I can get a postal order after school, and send it along. It's an awful worry owing money to a girl, you know!" said Bunter. "They never understand. You can talk to them

till you get a crick in the neck, and they still want to be paid. They ain't reasonable, you know. What are you grinning at, Mauly?"

Without explaining what he was grinning at, Lord Mauleverer dived a hand into a pocket and produced therefrom two half-crowns.

"Thanks, old chap!" said Bunter, his little round eyes glistening behind his big round spectacles. "I say, if you could make it seven-and-six— Don't walk away while a chap's talking to you, Mauly! Beast!"

Lord Mauleverer walked on.

Billy Bunter jingled five shillings and two half-crowns in his pocket.

This was something like!

Five shillings for Bessie, and five for Bunter—a worry off his fat mind, and a feed that he sorely needed at the school shop. The fact that he owed that little debt to a girl seemed to have an unloosening effect on cash in the Remove. Twice successful, Bunter wondered whether the same chicken would fight a third time. It was worth trying, at any rate.

He spotted Smithy and Redwing under the elms, and rolled over to them. The Bunder had heaps of money. Certainly, he had also a way of taking care of it. Still, if the same chicken would fight—

"I say, Smithy, I'm in rather a scrape!" said the fat Owl. "I owe five bob to a girl at Cliff House."

"You fat rotter!" said the Bunder.

"Well, it's all very well to call a fellow names," said Bunter. "But you'd feel a bit worried in the same fix. A chap can't go on owing a girl money. I say, it's only five bob, and I'll settle to-morrow—when my postal order comes—"

"Oh, scat!" grunted Vernon-Smith.

"It's worrying me fearfully!" said Bunter. "I've asked Wharton and his friends, and asked Mauly—I dare say you saw me speaking to them. I'd really ask anybody rather than go on owing money to a girl. You see, that sort of thing isn't done. Not Greyfriars style, is it?"

Redwing slipped his hand into his pocket.

Bunter's eyes glistened. The chicken was fighting again! Smithy, with another grunt, produced half-a-crown; Redwing did the same.

"Now get out, you fat toad!" snapped the Bunder.

Bunter got out, five shillings more to the good.

It did not occur to Bunter that there was anything unscrupulous in this. He had stated only the truth in each case—it was a fact that he owed five shillings to a girl at Cliff House. That he was borrowing that sum over and over again, he did not consider it necessary to mention. What occurred to Bunter was that he was on to a good thing, and that wisdom lay in making hay while the sun was shining.

"Toddy! I say, Toddy!" On his way to the tuckshop he spotted Peter Todd. "I say, old chap, I'm fearfully worried about that five bob I owe to Bessie! A chap can't go on owing money to a girl, can he? What's going to be done, Peter?"

"Looks to me as if Bessie's going to be done!" answered Peter.

"Tain't a joking matter, Toddy!" said Bunter reproachfully. "It's been worrying me no end! I mean to say, if it was a Remove man, I'd let it stand over; but you know what girls are! Be a pal, Toddy!"

Peter Todd looked at him.

Bunter waited—eagerly. Was that chicken going to fight a fourth time? It was!

"Well, I've got some tin left over from the hols," said Peter. "As you're in my study, I'd rather you didn't diddle Cliff House girls as well as Greyfriars fellows. Here you are, you bloated brigand!"

Billy Bunter could scarcely believe his good luck as Peter handed over the required sum. It was quite a harvest that morning. Bunter had a whole pound in his pocket now—it was almost too good to be true!

Leaving Peter, Bunter shot away—in the direction of the tuckshop.

As he did so, the bell began to ring. Break was brief—and break was over!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

There was no help for it. With four times five shillings burning a hole in his pocket, the fat Owl had to head for the Form-room and third school. His only solace was the prospect of a gorgeous spread as soon as the Remove were dismissed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Whole Hog!

MR QUELCH glanced at Bunter several times in third school. He frowned as he glanced.

On the second day of term, when fellows had not yet settled down to the collar, a certain amount of restlessness was excusable. Holidays were still fresh in mind—lessons had to be got used to. Plenty of fellows in every Form-room at Greyfriars had an eye on the time. But there was no doubt that Billy Bunter over-did it. His blinks at the Form-room clock were almost incessant. And as the Form-room clock was a little dim to the short-sighted Owl of the Remove, he verified the same by whispered inquiries to right and left. He was hardly still for a moment.

Bunter was always keen for a lesson to end. The only thing he found interesting in a lesson at all was the fact that it came to an end. But on this occasion his eagerness was unbounded.

Twenty shillings almost burned his pocket. Almost unlimited tuck dazzled him, in prospect, as soon as he got away from Quelch. Four times over had he borrowed that five bob he owed to Bessie Bunter—which meant tuck to the tune of fifteen shillings for William George.

It was really awful to stick in class with such a prospect before him. Never had an hour seemed so long to Bunter—never had Quelch seemed so long-winded. Mrs. Mimble had a new supply of the most scrumptious cream puffs at the school shop—and Bunter's fat mind dwelt on them ecstatically. Again and again he blinked at the clock. Again and again he whispered:

"I say, you fellows, what's the time?"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" grunted Peter Todd, at the umpteenth inquiry.

"Quelch's got an eye on you!"

"Oh, all right; but what's the time? I can't make out that beastly clock. I think it's slow! What's the time?"

"Bunter!"

The fat Owl jumped.

"Oh! Yes, sir! I wasn't speaking to Todd, sir! I was only saying——"

"Take fifty lines for talking in class, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter was silent for ten minutes. Twice, in that space, his eyes and his spectacles turned on the clock. He felt sure that it was slow—indeed, he suspected that it had stopped!

rapid sprint across to the tuckshop, and a feast of the gods——

"I say, Skinner——"

"Shurrup, fathead!"

"Yes, but what's the time?"

"Half-past what it was half an hour ago!" answered Skinner.

"Beast! I say, Fishy, what's the time?"

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"You are talking in class again," rumbled Mr. Quelch. "I will keep order in this Form! You will be detained half an hour after this lesson, Bunter!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter, in utter dismay.

That did it.

He sat crushed.

He did not whisper again. Quelch might have made it an hour. It was an awful disaster. Instead of cutting across to the school shop the moment the Remove was dismissed, Bunter had to wait in half an hour—with twenty shillings in his pocket, and as hungry as a shipwrecked seaman in an open boat at sea.

Dismissal came at last!

The Remove marched out—glad to get out into the sunshine.

Glad would Bunter have been to follow. In the faint—the very faint—hope that Quelch might not notice him, Bunter rolled doorward with the Form.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

"You are detained for half an hour, Bunter! You will sit down at your desk," said Mr. Quelch, severely. "In order that you may not waste your time, Bunter, you may write out the full conjugation of 'amo' in both the active and the passive voice."

Bunter almost collapsed at his desk.

Conjugations, either in the active or the passive, had no appeal whatever for Billy Bunter.

Still, matters might have been worse. Quelch might have given him an irregular verb to conjugate. Irregular verbs, in Bunter's hands, developed an irregularity that would have made a Latin grammarian stare and gasp. Even regular verbs became rather irregular when Bunter dealt with them. "Amo" was really an easy one, if that was any comfort.

It was not much.

Billy Bunter almost groaned aloud over "amo, amas, amat." If Quelch left him to it, that verb was not likely to get very far in the way of conjugation.

But Quelch did not leave him to it. He sat at his desk correcting papers. Sometimes he would take them to his study for this purpose. Now he remained in the Form-room—just to worry Bunter, apparently.

If the previous hour had seemed long to Bunter, the next half-hour seemed longer. Minutes crawled by like wounded snakes.

There were only thirty, as usual, to that half-hour; but every one of them seemed enormously elongated.

Bunter was hardly half-way through the active voice of that beastly verb, when the half-hour, at long last, ended. The passive voice remained untouched. He had an awful dread that Quelch might look at his paper, and tell him to finish that mouldy conjugation.

But Quelch was merciful. He glanced up.

"You may go, Bunter!"

Bunter was gone almost before he glanced down again.

He fairly shot out of the Form-room. He did the corridor at a pace seldom put on by sprinters for the school

hundred yards. He whizzed out of the House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo——"

"Can't stop!" gasped Bunter.

"I'm going down to Friardale on my bike, fathead—I'll get that postal order for you, if you like. I——"

Bunter was gone.

Owing to detention, it was not long till dinner now. But if dinner had been only five minutes off, Bunter could not have waited for it—he could hardly have waited five seconds.

He whizzed into the school shop.

Then came happiness. Bunter felt like a weary storm-tossed mariner, safe on land at last. He felt like an ancient Egyptian entering on the fat years after the lean years.

He sat at the counter and started! He guzzled! He guzzled and guzzled! Seldom had he been so hungry! Seldom had his cash resources been so ample. Fifteen shillings was a large sum to expend at a single go. Bunter went ahead—recklessly.

Mrs. Mimble had an eye on him, however.

Fellows came back to school in funds—and possibly Bunter was in funds. But she knew Bunter. If Bunter ran up an account, that account was not easy to collect. Bunter had no credit at the school shop. His cash was welcome, but credit was off. Like the Persian poet, Mrs. Mimble was disposed to take the cash and let the credit go!

Her expression grew more and more serious as Bunter bolted and bolted, and guzzled and guzzled.

"Master Bunter——"

"Another lot of jam tarts, please!"

Guzzle, guzzle!

"That will be seventeen-and-six, Master Bunter."

"Eh?"

"Seventeen-and-six——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Seventeen-and-six!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter had meant to stop at fifteen shillings. He really had. It was all Quelch's fault, for keeping him in, and making him so fearfully hungry before he started.

The fat Owl paused in dismay, with a tart in his fat hand, suspended midway like Mahomet's coffin.

"Did—did—did you say seventeen-and-six?" he gasped.

"I did," said Mrs. Mimble coldly, "and I never allow credit, Master Bunter."

"The—the fact is, ma'am, I—I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"Seventeen-and-six, please!"

Mrs. Mimble had heard that one before—a good many times, in fact!

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter.

He groped in his pocket. A varied assortment of shillings and half-crowns appeared in view. Bunter laid down the whole pound. He had been going to keep five shillings for Bessie—really he had! But it was no use keeping half-a-crown! With the feminine pertinacity that Bunter knew only too well, Bessie would make out that five shillings was five shillings—not two-and-six. The fat Owl realised that he might as well go the whole hog! And he really did want some more tarts. They were delicious—and there was still some cubic space within Bunter available.

The last half-crown went. The whole pound was gathered into Mrs. Mimble's till.

Billy Bunter cast a longing blink at the good things that were now beyond his reach—and rolled out of the tuckshop.

He was feeling better—distinctly

better. But that rotten worry was on his mind again. He owed Bessie five shillings—and he was stony. He could only hope that the chicken would fight again—and that some other fellow, who felt that it was not the thing to owe money to a girl at a girls' school, would cough up five bob before Wednesday.

But it was a worry on Bunter's mind as he rolled in to dinner. His fat brow was clouded with thought—till he saw that there was steak-and-kidney pie for dinner. Then he brightened up again and enjoyed life once more.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Begging for It!

COKER laughed.

There was nothing, so far as Potter and Greene could see, at which to laugh, so far as Coker was concerned.

Walking in the quad after class, Coker was talking cricket to his friends, so Potter and Greene, naturally, were inclined to laugh. Coker on cricket was enough to make a cat laugh. But it was serious enough to Coker—very serious indeed—he had not the slightest notion that he was funny when he talked games—almost as funny as when he played them. So when Horace left off talking cricket to burst into that laugh, Potter and Greene glanced round, to see what had excited his sudden merriment.

Except Coker, nothing of a comic nature met their eyes.

Wingate of the Sixth was standing in conversation with Gwynne and Walker of that Form, close at hand. Nobody else was near. There was nothing to excite mirth in a group of Sixth Form prefects in the quad.

Yet they could see Coker's attention was fixed on Wingate—and he laughed.

Slowing down, so as to keep near the Sixth Form men, Coker laughed again.

Wingate glanced round.

His eyes fell on Coker.

For a third time, Coker of the Fifth laughed—right in the face of the captain of the school.

Then he walked on, grinning.

Potter and Greene walked on with him, red and uncomfortable.

Wingate's face had coloured a little, and he looked after them very expressively. To the relief of Potter and Greene, however, he took no further heed.

Coker grinned cheerily.

"That," he remarked complacently, "will show that ass what a fellow thinks of him—what?"

He chuckled.

"Making out that he was going to give a Fifth Form man six, and then climbing down in front of the whole school!" chuckled Coker. "Jevver hear of such a silly ass! What? Do him good to rub it in a bit!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Potter.

"Oh scissors!" groaned Greene.

Coker was rubbing it in! He found it amusing so to do! From Horace Coker's own peculiar point of view, he had scored a triumph—a tremendous triumph—over the captain of the school. Naturally a fellow in such a triumphant state was disposed to spread himself a little.

Every other man in the Fifth, of course, knew that Coker had had a narrow escape. Wingate had been unusually patient and kind to Coker. Any other prefect at Greyfriars would have carried right on, and Coker, if he

continued to resist, would have found himself as powerless as a nut in a nut-cracker. But this was quite hidden from Coker. Wingate had been good-natured and forbearing, unwilling to exert his powers if he could help it, reluctant to humiliate a Fifth Form senior by making him bend over and take six like a fag; but—to Horace Coker all this meant only that the Greyfriars captain had bitten off more than he could chew, and had ignominiously climbed down.

That was the sort of intellect with which Horace James Coker was blessed. And having, as he happily supposed, triumphed over Wingate of the Sixth, Coker was the man to spread himself on the strength of it. He was not the man to spread himself a little—but a lot!

"Make him feel a bit small—what?" smiled Coker. "Standing there with two other jolly old prefects—ha, ha! Some fellows don't even dare to walk by, with three prefects standing there! Ha, ha! Well, I don't give a rap for the Sixth, and I don't care who knows it."

"I—I wouldn't rag Wingate, old man," murmured Potter. "He's jolly good-tempered, but there's a limit, you know."

"If he got waxy, old chap—" hinted Greene.

"Don't talk rot!" said Coker. "Think I care whether he's waxy or not? He was waxy enough yesterday, and threatened to give me six! Ha, ha! I've no use for Sixth Form swank, I can tell you. I fancy I've just let him see how much I care for fat-headed prefects."

Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeless look. It seemed that Coker would never learn that Wingate could give six, until Wingate gave them. He was going on asking for them till he got them.

"You fellows," went on Coker loftily, "can kow-tow if you like. Not me. I think I've made it pretty clear that I'm not standing any swank from the Sixth. It's about time they were pushed off their perch, in my opinion. Whopping fags is all right—it's good for them. But when a man makes out that he can whop the Fifth, it's time he was told where he gets off. And I'm the fellow to tell him, and put it jolly plain, too!"

Coker walked on, happy and glorious.

"Hallo, there's that young rotter!" he exclaimed. "Hold on, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was rolling by. He did not notice the Fifth Form men—his fat mind was concentrated on a problem of finance. But he noticed Coker, as that youth reached out and nipped him by a fat ear with finger and thumb.

"Whoooooooooooo!" roared Bunter, surprised and hurt.

Every fellow in the Greyfriars quad heard that roar. Dozens of fellows looked round.

Regardless, Coker pulled the fat ear.

"You young sweep!" said Coker severely. "I caught you snaffling tuck in my study yesterday. I came after you to whop you—"

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"And you got away," went on Coker.

"Now—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"For the love of Mike, Coker, chuck it," implored Potter. "Wingate's looking this way!"

"That's what I want."

"Eh?"

"Show him how much I care for him, see?" explained Coker.

"Oh, my hat!"

Evidently Coker was bent on asking for it. He was "rubbing it in" not

wisely, but too well. There was a swarm of fellows in the quad after class. Every individual in that swarm was going to see exactly how much Coker cared for Wingate. Coker was going to laugh, when the head prefect, instead of intervening, pretended not to notice anything.

As it turned out, Coker had no occasion to laugh. Wingate of the Sixth came towards the spot with long strides. His brows were knitted. Coker's mocking laugh, in passing him, had perhaps convinced him that it was no use going easy with the ineffable Horace. Anyhow, he was angry now.

"Let Bunter go at once, Coker!" rapped Wingate.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

"Do you hear me, Coker?"

Coker, still with finger and thumb nipping the Owl's fat ear, stared at Wingate quite coolly.

"I'm not deaf!" he pointed out.

"I've told you to let Bunter go!" said Wingate, breathing hard.

"And I tell you to mind your own business, Wingate!" answered Coker cheerfully. "That fat tick snaffled tuck in my study yesterday, and I'm going to pull his ear! See! I'm pulling it! And you're not going to stop me, see?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Will you let go Bunter's ear, Coker?" asked Wingate, very quietly.

"No," said Coker, still cheery, "I won't!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" yelled Bunter.

Wingate had his official ash under his arm. He slipped it into his hand. There was a sudden crack, like a pistol-shot, as it swiped on Coker's trousers.

Coker gave a startled, astonished roar. He let go Bunter's ear quite suddenly and glared at Wingate, gasping.

"Now," said Wingate, "bend over, Coker. It's no good talking to you. Bend over; I'm going to give you six."

"You're going to whatter?" snorted Coker. "Don't be a fool, Wingate! I'd like to see you do it!"

"You're going to! Bend over!" said Wingate. He swished the ashplant impatiently. "I'm waiting, Coker!"

Coker glared.

Half Greyfriars was gathered round the scene now in a breathlessly excited throng. Sixth Form and Fifth Form seniors, Shell and Fourth and Remove, fags of the Third and the Second swarmed round, staring and grinning. The tug-of-war had come. Coker had asked for it, begged for it—and here it was. Masters were seen at study windows looking out. The unusual excitement in the quad was drawing the attention of the whole school.

Coker, red with wrath, faced the captain of Greyfriars undauntedly.

Possibly it trickled into his solid brain that his triumph over Wingate was not so complete as he had fancied. Perhaps he realised that he was, after all, in a bad box. But Coker was not the man to surrender—not Coker!

"You cheeky ass!" he bawled.

"I'm waiting!" said Wingate.

"Keep that cane away from my trousers, you cheeky dummy!" roared Coker. "I've a jolly good mind to knock you spinning for touching me with it!"

"Are you going to bend over?"

"No!" bellowed Coker. "Got that? Who are you, I'd like to know? Go and eat coke! See? Wash it out! Climb down, as you did before! See? Why, I'd bung you in the eye as soon as look at you! I'll—"

"Silence, Coker!" said a deep voice. In the breathless excitement no one



"I'm waiting!" said Wingate. "Are you going to bend over?" "No!" bellowed Coker. "Who are you, I'd like to know? Why, I'd bung you in the eye as soon as look at you! I'll—" "Silence, Coker!" In the breathless excitement, no one had noticed the majestic figure of the Head approaching the spot.

had noticed a majestic figure approaching the spot; but at that deep, commanding voice there was a hush, and even Coker's bull-voice died away. "The Head!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bend Over!

"THE Head!"

The Greyfriars crowd made respectful way for Dr. Locke. There was a breathless hush as the Head stood and fixed his stern eyes on Coker of the Fifth.

Wingate's face was almost expressionless, but many varying expressions chased one another over Coker's speaking countenance.

He could see at half a glance that the Head was down on him. Why, he did not know, but the fact itself was plain enough.

"Coker!" said Dr. Locke in a voice that was not loud, but deep.

"Oh, ye-es, sir?" stammered Horace.

"I gather, Coker, that you have refused to be caned by a Sixth Form prefect, invested by me with authority to administer canings."

"Oh!" stammered Coker. That was, Coker thought, putting it rather rottenly—making out that Coker was disregarding the Head's own authority. He did not realise that that was precisely what he was doing.

"Is that the case, Coker?"

"You—you see, sir—"

"Answer me—yes or no, Coker?"

"Yes," gasped Coker.

"Very well," said Dr. Locke. "I shall be sorry to send a boy away from Greyfriars at the beginning of the term, Coker; but, as you leave me no alternative—"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Coker.

"You may go into the House and pack your box, Coker."

"Pip-pip-pack my bub-bub-box?" stuttered Coker.

"At once!" said the Head.

Coker blinked at him. He seemed quite dizzy. There was a dead silence in the crowd. Everybody was sorry for poor old Coker. Still, if a fellow begged and prayed for a thing, he had to have it. Coker really was not at Greyfriars to run the school, though sometimes he seemed to fancy that he was.

"You—you—you dud-dud-don't mean I'm bub-bub-bunked, sir?" gasped the hapless Horace at last.

"What? I mean that you are expelled, Coker, certainly!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I am sorry, Coker. But last term there were many complaints of your unruly folly; and a boy with whom the prefects cannot deal is out of place here," said the Head.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Coker. "I—I say, sir, I—I didn't mean—I wasn't—I mean, I never meant—that is, I—I—I mean to say—Oh crumbs!"

"That will do, Coker. Go!"

"I—I—I mean, I—I—Oh lor'! I—I—I'd rather be whopped than sacked, sir!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I—"

Dr. Locke gazed at him thoughtfully.

"Very well, Coker," he said at last.

"I will give you one more chance, but it will be the last. Any further defiance of authority on your part, and you will know what to expect. You will now bend over and take six strokes from the cane."

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Yes, sir."

Dr. Locke turned and rustled away.

Coker stood facing Wingate. There was a faint smile on the face of the captain of Greyfriars; he waited.

Slowly, slowly—very slowly indeed—

Horace Coker bent over; with a crimson face he bent and touched his toes.

Over his bent back Potter and Greene exchanged a wink.

They were Coker's pals, and they liked old Horace; but they quite failed to see why Horace James should not toe the line like any other fellow, and they hoped charitably that this would do him good.

Other fellows were grinning.

There had been an almost tragic hush while the Head was present; now the Head was gone and tragedy was replaced by comedy.

Flick!

The cane hardly touched Coker.

Coker had asked for it, begged for it, and would not be happy till he got it. Now that he was getting it, however, it did not amount to much in the way of a caning. Wingate merely flicked him. As the Head had said that Coker was to take six strokes, Wingate gave him six—but they would hardly have hurt a fly. Then he tucked the ashplant under his arm and walked away, dismissing the incident as a trifle.

It was no trifle to Coker.

So lightly had the flicks fallen that the great Horace remained bending for a few moments, uncertain whether the ordeal was over or not.

Wingate had walked away, and was talking cricket again with Gwynne and Walker, when Coker looked up—and then got up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared round; his face was crimson. He had not been hurt, but that mattered very little to Coker; he was tough, and could have taken a whopping. It was the awful humiliation that worried Coker.

He, Horace James Coker of the Fifth.
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Form, had bent over in the quad, in sight of the whole school, and taken six from a prefect's ash!

After all his high words, after all his swank, after all his statements at the top of his voice that he did not give a rap for the Sixth, he had bent over like a fag and had been whopped!

It seemed to Coker that it was time for the skies to fall, for the stars of the firmament to wobble on their way.

To the other fellows it did not; it struck them as funny, rather than anything else. They grinned and they chuckled.

"Thus are the mighty fallen!" sighed Skinner of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" chortled Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, the cheeky cad pulled my ear!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "He's jolly well had six for it! He, he, he!"

Coker strode away; he looked round for Potter and Greene as he went. To his surprise, they were grinning like the rest. Alone, crimson, with quite a dazed feeling, Horace Coker walked away to the House. Seldom did Coker of the Fifth seek shy seclusion; generally he liked the limelight—and lots of it. Now he wanted to get out of the public eye.

He got out.

He went to his study; he dropped into a chair. That "six" did not prevent him from sitting down with comfort.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker.

He could hardly believe it yet.

"Oh crikey!" said Coker.

He had had six. A fellow couldn't check the Head; above all, a fellow couldn't let himself be bunked. Nevertheless, he had had six—six on the bags!

He was still dizzily gazing into space, trying to assimilate this awful happening, when Potter and Greene came in. It was tea-time, and they were thinking of tea.

"Oh, here you are, Coker!" said Potter. "Might have shoved the kettle on as you're here!"

"The kettle!" repeated Coker.

"Well, yes. It's past tea-time."

"Tea-time!" Coker was not thinking of tea-time.

"Well, lend a hand, Greeney," said Potter briskly. "Anything in the stove—we've got to boil that kettle, if we're going to have any tea—or a few sticks in the grate. Any sticks, Coker?"

"Sticks!" Coker was not thinking of sticks.

Potter glanced at him.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Anything up?"

Coker could only gaze at Potter. He had had six on the bags—he, Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. And Potter asked him whether there was anything the matter, and whether there was anything up. Speechless, Coker gazed at his uncomprehending pal.

He rose with dignity from the chair.

"I've had six," he said.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Where's the tea caddy?"

Coker breathed hard.

"You don't think it matters?" he asked.

"No. Why?"

"No. Why?" repeated Coker. "Oh, that's how you look at it, is it? It doesn't matter, any more than if it was a fellow like you or Greene. Is that it?" Coker breathed harder.

"You were grinning over it in the

quad, I remember. Now you've come in, I'll give you something to grin at!"

Coker's cricket bat stood in a corner. He dived for it. At cricket, Coker was not likely to do much execution with that bat. But as he whirled round on Potter and Greene, with the bat in his grasp, he looked like doing quite a lot of execution on his study-mates.

They stepped out quite quickly. They did not tea with Coker, after all; they tea'd with Hilton and Price in the next study. And from that study, during tea, there came continual sounds of laughter.

Coker, plunged in the deepest, gloomiest pessimism, heeded it not.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wharton is Wanted!

"I SAY, you fellows, look out!" Billy Bunter squeaked hurriedly in at the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove. Staying only for that one warning squeak, he scuttled on.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in the study. It was nearly time for prep, and they were sorting out their books. They glanced round to the door, only in time to see Bunter vanish.

"What the dickens——" said Harry.

A heavy tread in the passage answered the unfinished question. The next moment Coker of the Fifth looked in.

That was why Bunter had not lingered. He did not want Coker of the Fifth at close quarters. The deep, heavy, gloomy frown on Horace Coker's brow was by no means reassuring.

Wharton and Nugent eyed the Fifth Form man warily. In a casual sort of way, Nugent picked up a cricket stump, and Wharton dropped his hand on an inkpot on the table. Really, they would have supposed that even Coker had had enough trouble to begin the term on. Still, if he had come there for more, more was ready for him.

Coker, however, darkly frowning as he was, did not look hostile. He tramped into the study, with his heavy tread. Noticing the stump and the inkpot, he grunted.

"I haven't come here to whop you, you young asses!"

"I know that," assented Wharton politely. "But I thought you might fancy that you had."

Coker gave him a look. The captain of the Remove rewarded him with a cheerful smile. A large hand, for a moment, clenched. But Coker unclenched it again. They regarded him curiously. He had not, it seemed, come there for war; but what other object he could have in paying a visit to a Remove study was rather a mystery.

He sat rather heavily on the corner of the study table. It was close on prep, but he did not seem to be thinking of prep. Wharton and Nugent were thinking of it, but they did not mind giving Coker a few minutes of their valuable time. But they wondered, more and more, what old Horace wanted.

"I want you to do something for me, Wharton," said Coker at last.

He seemed to have some little difficulty in getting it out. Clearly he

did not like asking—he preferred giving orders, in dealing with fags. But he got it out.

"Go it!" said Harry, more and more surprised. "Anything I can do, old bean?"

Wharton, as a matter of fact, was feeling a spot of sympathy for Coker. Seldom were Fifth Form seniors whopped; and Coker's whopping had been frightfully public, nearly all Greyfriars looking on at it. The fact that he had begged for it did not, of course, make it nicer.

But Coker was a difficult man with whom to sympathise. He gave Wharton a grim look.

"Don't call me old bean," he said icily. "I haven't come here to whop you, as I said; but don't be cheeky."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, go it, minus old bean!" he said amiably.

"You needn't fancy that I wanted to come here," said Coker gloomily. "But I've had rather a row with Potter and Greene, and I've asked Blundell, and he only called me a fool; and I asked Fitzgerald, and that silly Irish idiot simply cackled as if it was funny, and I asked two or three other men in the Fifth, but——"

Coker paused, with a grunt.

Apparently, Fifth Form men had failed to give their support in what Coker had in mind—whatever it was. That was why he had trickled into the Remove. But what was it? The chums of the Remove could only wonder.

"It's that swab Wingate!" Coker got it out. "I dare say you know that the silly fool gave me six this afternoon. Of course, the Head was backing him up, or he would never have got away with it. I'd have knocked him down fast enough; but a man can't knock his headmaster down."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "No! N-n-not quite. I—I—I shouldn't start knocking headmasters down, if I were you, Coker."

"I mean, I respect the Head," explained Coker. "He may be an old ass, but a fellow must respect his headmaster."

"Sort of," admitted Wharton.

He gazed at Coker. He was glad to hear that Coker respected Dr. Locke too much to knock him down. But a fellow who could even think, for a split second, of knocking his headmaster down was worth looking at.

"As the matter stands," said Coker, "Wingate gets by with it. Whops a Fifth Form man, and gets by with it. I don't know what Greyfriars is coming to, but there it is. Looks to me as if the old school is going to the dogs this term. Well, if the Head is going to carry on like this, a man can't punch a prefect—as a prefect. A man doesn't want to be sacked."

Wharton glanced at the study clock. It was not going; but he glanced at it, as a hint that it was time Coker was going. Prep had to be considered by the Remove men, if not by Coker.

Coker, regardless, continued:

"But there's more ways than one of killing a cat. I've been thinking this over, you see, and I've thought it out."

Politely the captain of the Remove refrained from asking Coker what he had done that with.

"Wingate's a prefect, and it seems that the Head's going to back up the prefects, no matter what silly, cheeky fools they are," went on Coker. "A man can't punch Wingate—as a prefect. But he can punch him as a

Sixth Form chap in a scrap. He can send him a challenge."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "That's what I'm going to do," explained Coker. "I'm not going to punch prefects, with the Head barging in and talking about bunking a chap. I'm going to challenge Wingate to meet me in the gym with the gloves on—not as a prefect, but simply as a Greyfriars man. I don't see how he can refuse, unless he chooses to show up as a funk."

Evidently Coker had been thinking to some purpose. This was the outcome of his mental efforts.

He had got round the difficulty. At least, he fancied that he had.

As a prefect, Wingate could not be punched. But it was open to him, if he liked, to accept a challenge to a scrap. In his official capacity he was, so to speak, unpunchable; as a private individual, he could be punched, and punched hard. This was quite brilliant of Coker.

He had, of course, overlooked a few considerations. If a prefect could be booked for a scrap by any fellow he had to whop, whopping privs would soon be a thing of the past. There were fellows in the Shell, one or two even in the Remove, who could have stood up to some of the prefects, and in the Fifth, of course, lots of them. There was still another consideration that Coker had overlooked. Wingate was the heftiest man in the Sixth, and the best boxer at Greyfriars. Coker, beefy as he was, had not the remotest chance in a scrap with Wingate. In such a scrap Coker would simply have answered the purpose of a punch-ball.

Blind to all these considerations, Coker was satisfied and pleased with his great scheme for setting matters right.

"You see," he went on, "a fellow looks rather a fool, saying that he won't be whopped, and then taking six before all the school."

"He does—a bit," agreed Wharton, as gravely as he could, while Frank Nugent turned his head and smiled at the bookcase.

"I'm not the fellow to take it lying down," said Coker.

"But you weren't lying down," said Wharton innocently, "you were standing up and bending over."

"Don't be a fool, Wharton! I mean I'm not the fellow to stand it," said Coker irritably. "I'm going to challenge Wingate. I need a second—see? Not a man in the Fifth will act for me! You'd hardly believe it, but there it is."

The Removites could quite believe it!

"That's why I'm here," explained Coker. "You needn't tell me it's rather undignified for a senior man, especially one in my position, to ask a fag to act as his second! I know that. But if the seniors let a man down he must do the best he can—and a grubby fag's better than nothing."

"You put it so nicely!" murmured Wharton.

"You're to go to Wingate and take him my challenge," said Coker. "Any time or place he pleases, with or without gloves. I'm prepared to agree to anything, so long as he comes up to the scratch, and takes what's coming to him. So long as I thrash him I shall be satisfied."

"I—I—I'm to go to the captain of the school, and—and—and check him in his own study—"

"You're to do exactly as I tell you," said Coker testily. "Tell him you're my

(Continued on next page.)

The STATELY HOMES of GREYFRIARS

THE UPPER TEN

By

The Greyfriars Rhymester



Rich or poor, our clever Greyfriars Rhymester takes 'em all in his stride. This week he gives you a brief description in verse of CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, one of the idle rich from Grosvenor Square—known to his schoolfellows as the aristocratic captain of the Upper Fourth.

(1)

Oh, search the world from east to west
And search from south to north,
And none you'll find is better dressed
Than Temple of the Fourth.
Yes, he's the pick of the aristocrats
From his elegant tile to his spotless spats,
No flaws on him. No fear!
He's always droppin' his g's, and that's
The style of Vere de Vere.

(2)

His pater's house in Grosvenor Square
Is awfully up to date,
For dukes and duchesses visit there
In high and mighty state.
The butler man is a marvellous sight,
His eyebrows will give you a terrible fright
If ever you make him frown.
He measures as much from left to right
As he measures from up to down.

(3)

Sir Reginald Temple's terribly rich;
He doesn't know what he's got!
Myself, I know to a ha'penny—which
Is why I am writing this rot.
But millionaires, or so we are told,
Are all unhappy and soon grow old
Unless they have first gone mad;
There's nothing like getting a lot of gold
To make a fellow feel bad.

(4)

So pity our poor old Sir Reginald then,
And Cecil, his only son.
Their misery's bitter enough for ten—
They never have any fun!
For while they are eating their caviar
Or pate-de-what-you-may-call-it-gras,
Which gives them the tummy ache,
They think how lucky the poor folk are
Who cannot afford a rump steak!

(5)

They sit in their Posho-de-Pullman twelves
And bitterly think the while
Of people who walk and enjoy themselves
By plodding the weary mile.
Yes, pity the rich in their luxury cars,
Who drink champagne and smoke dollar cigars
Until they fall down on the floor!
To think of their fate makes us thank all our
stars
That we were born lucky and poor!

(6)

In summer their lot is especially hard,
They can't spend a fortnight's vac.
At Margate to walk down the old Promenade,
And then, after that, to walk back!
No fear, they must hurry in yachts off to
Cowes,
Then tear up to Scotland to slaughter the
grouse
(Which please pronounce "growse" to
rhyme!)
Yes, pity the rich who, the millionaire vows,
Endure such a terrible time.

(7)

In winter Sir Reginald's huntin', of course,
And Cecil hunts, too, when he can.
Top-hatted he sits on a champion horse
And looks every fathom a man!
Then fifty-two huntsmen collect for the feast,
With foxhounds—a couple of dozen at least—
And move without flinching to slay
That terrible roaring, ferocious wild beast—
The man-eating fox! (Hip-hooray!)

(8)

The monster's unearthed and away they all
go.
Until the big brute goes to ground.
Our Cecil won't take many fences, you know,
He finds it less fag to ride round.
He frequently lands on the back of his neck
But that is all part of the fun, I expect,
I cannot say much about that,
But I'd very much like to call myself, by heck,
A blue-blooded aristocrat!

Next Week: A HOME IN THE HILLS.

second, empowered to make all arrangements. See?"

"Oh crikey! And suppose he gives me six for my cheek!" gasped Harry.

"Well, he might," admitted Coker. "The fellow seems to be an utter fool, all round, and there's no telling what he might do. Never mind that—"

"I do mind—a little," Harry pointed out.

"I said never mind that," repeated Coker, raising his voice. "I haven't come here to argue. Don't jaw! Just do as you're told."

"Is that the lot?" asked Harry.

"Yes, that's all."

"Good! We're enjoying your conversation no end, old man, but we've got to get to prep! Loder's on duty this evening, and he may look in!" explained Wharton. "We're not fearfully keen on trouble with the prefects—you see, we can't ask Loder to have the gloves on afterwards, if he whops us—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

"He wouldn't, you know!" explained Wharton blandly. "More likely to give us a little extra ash, if we mentioned it. Good-bye, Coker!"

"Are you going to do as I've told you?"

"Not quite!"

Coker slid off the study table. He pushed back his cuffs. He had been patient—very patient, for Coker of the Fifth. His patience was exhausted now. Let down in the Fifth, he was turned down in the Remove. Clearly, he had to look farther than Study No. 1 for a second to carry his challenge to Wingate. War was the next item on the programme.

Cricket stump and inkpot came to the fore again. But just then there was a tread in the passage, and Loder of the Sixth looked in. Probably he had heard Coker's voice, which had great carrying powers.

He stared at Coker.

"What the dickens are you doing here?" he snapped. "It's prep! What are you doing out of your study?"

Coker looked at him.

No fellow was allowed out of his study in prep. Fifth Form men, it was true, were seldom or never called to order. As seniors, they were supposed to know how to behave themselves. Nevertheless, they could be called to order, just like juniors, if occasion arose—as Coker had learned, only too unpleasantly, that very day.

"Find out!" trembled on Coker's lips. But he did not utter the words. He breathed hard, and did not speak.

"Get out of this!" snapped Loder.

Coker breathed so hard that he nearly choked.

"Do you hear me, Coker? Go back to your study at once!" snapped Loder. He pointed to the door with his ash.

Wharton and Nugent hardly breathed. Coker's face, getting redder and redder, showed that he was on the very edge of an explosion. After one awfully narrow escape, was he going to ask for it again?

Loder, who was a good deal of a bully, made his manner as unpleasant as he could. Gerald Loder, as a rule, avoided trouble with hefty men, prefect as he was. But the happenings of that day encouraged Loder to throw his weight about in dealing with Coker.

For a moment, perhaps, he regretted it as he saw the look on Coker's face. He stepped back rather quickly, to give Coker plenty of room to pass. The sack for Coker would not have replaced Loder's nose, had Coker knocked it.

through the back of his head, as he was obviously tempted to do!

But the hapless Horace had learned his lesson. Loder was a swab, whom he despised from the bottom of his heart; but behind Loder loomed the awful vision of the Head. That, now, was impressed on Coker.

Choking, Coker walked out of the study in silence. In silence, though on the verge of suffocation, he went back to the Fifth.

Loder left the study after him.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exchanged a grin, and sat down to prep.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

RICHARD NUGENT, of the Second Form, tapped at the door of Wingate's study in the Sixth, and put his cheeky countenance into that study.

Two Sixth Form men were there—Wingate and his chum, Gwynne. They gave Nugent minor an inquiring glance.

"Note for you, Wingate!"

Dicky Nugent laid an envelope on the study table. Wingate, in surprise, picked it up.

"From Coker!" explained Nugent minor, with a grin. "I'm to wait for an answer."

Coker's recent experiences were talked of far and wide, and chortled over in the Second as much as in the other Forms. One touch of Coker made the whole school grin!

"What the dickens——" grunted Wingate.

Why Coker of the Fifth sent him a note by a fag rather puzzled the captain of Greyfriars. However, he opened the envelope and took out the folded missive within.

He stared at that missive.

"The howling ass!" he ejaculated.

"Is that the answer?" inquired Dicky Nugent, grinning more widely than before.

"No; shut up! Look at that, Gwynne!"

Gwynne of the Sixth took Coker's note and looked at it. Then he rocked with merriment.

It was a serious note, on a serious subject. Coker had not by any means intended to be funny. Coker was no humorist; but he often produced comic effects inadvertently. That note ran:

"Dear Wingate,—As noboddy is willing to akt as my sekkond, I am putting this to you personally.

"You wopped me. I dare say you think yoreself fritefully clevver, with the Beck to see you threw. Perhaps you're not so clevver as you phancy.

"I'm challenging you to a fite. I suggest dropping the prefekt and standing up like a mann. Name your own time and plaice, with gluvvs or without. I should preffer it in the jim, with all the school looking on, but pleezo yoreself.

"I warn you planely that if you stand on yore dignutty as a prefekt, and refewse to fite like a mann, I shall look on you as a sneeking phunk, and hold you up to riddycule all over Greyfriars!

"Yores kontemptuously,

"HORACE J. COKER.

"P.S.—Bee a mann!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gwynne. "Prout would like to see this! Is that how they spell in Prout's Form?"

"The cheeky ass!" said Wingate, laughing. "If he wasn't the blither-

ingest idiot ever I'd give him another six for his impudence."

"That the answer, Wingate?" asked Nugent minor.

"Wait a minute."

Wingate took a pencil, wrote a few words on the back of the note, and enclosed it in an envelope.

"Take that to Coker, kid!" he said.

Nugent minor left the study, leaving the two Sixth Form men laughing, and made his way to the Fifth.

He grinned in at the door of the games study, where a number of the Fifth were gathered after prep. Coker was among them, his face the only serious one in the room. Every other fellow in the games study was grinning.

"Here you are, Coker!" said Dicky Nugent. "Catch!"

He tossed the envelope across to Coker. But he did not depart. He lingered to hear more, to be able to take back a full report to the Second, and set that Form in a roar.

"By gum!" said Blundell. "Has Wingate answered?"

"Hardly thought he'd take the trouble," remarked Hilton.

"Let's hear what he says, Coker, old man!" grinned Fitzgerald.

"I don't see anything to snigger at," said Coker coldly. "I've challenged Wingate to a fight. If he's got the pluck to stand up like a man, and not hide himself behind being a prefect, I'm going to thrash him. Nothing funny in that that I can see."

"Lots of things you can't see, old man!" remarked Potter.

"You think you could thrash him, if he took it on?" asked Price, with a wink at the other Fifth Formers.

"I don't think—I know!" answered Coker calmly. "You fellows know whether I'm the best boxer at Greyfriars or not."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Modesty, thy name is Coker!" murmured Hilton.

"Facts are facts, whether you like to see them or not," said Coker. "I've no doubt Wingate could put up a scrap if he has the pluck. I only hope he will. If he refuses, I shall have to make him, somehow. After all, a fellow won't like being denounced as a sneaking funk."

He opened the letter.

"The silly ass! He's sent my note back!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate wrote the answer on the back, Coker!" said Dicky Nugent.

"Oh!" Coker turned the note over. "I see! Why—what—what the thump! The rotten funk! The sneaking worm! Look at that! What do you fellows think of that?"

Coker held up Wingate's reply. It was brief:

"Declined with thanks—G. WINGATE."

"Ha, ha, ha!" There was a roar in the games study. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The mouldy funk!" gasped Coker. "Hiding behind his dashed dignity as a prefect! My hat! Fancy a chap who's captain of the school being afraid to put his hands up! Think of it!"

"You footling, frabjous ass!" said Blundell. "If you stood up to Wingate, he would knock you into a cocked hat in the first round! I couldn't stand up to Wingate myself, you fathead!"

"I know you couldn't! You're not much use—precious little, in a scrap, Blundell! I could knock him out all right!"

"Oh!" gasped Blundell.

"Any more messages, Coker?" asked Dicky Nugent, grinning. Richard Nugent was not, as a rule, an industrious



Almost exhausted, Wingate held on to Bessie Bunter. "Now give her to me!" gasped Coker, fixing a firm grip on the plump girl's hair. Bessie let out a series of piercing shrieks. "For goodness' sake, let go!" panted Wingate. "We shall both be drowned if you don't!"

fag. But he was more than willing to have a hand in this. He was enjoying this.

"Yes!" snorted Coker. "Wait a minute! Give me that pen, Potter!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Give me that pen, and don't jaw!"

Taking pen and paper, Coker wrote, with all the fellows in the games study watching and grinning. What Coker wrote was worth reading. It ran:

"If you're gowing to hyde behind your rotten dignutty as a prefect, I shall make it a poynt to let all Greyfriars kno that you're afrade to put up your hands like a mann. Why not bee a mann? Do you reely want the phinger of skorn to be poynted at you?—H. J. COKER."

"Take that to Wingate, and bring me his answer!" said Coker.

Nugent minor went off again.

There was a continuous sound of chuckling in the games study while he was gone.

Coker, puzzled and annoyed, glared at the Fifth Form men. He was still unable to see anything comic in this very serious matter.

Nugent minor came back at last. He handed Coker his own note, this time not enclosed in an envelope.

"The answer's on the back, Coker!" chortled Dicky.

Every eye in the games study read the answer:

"Any more of this, and you get another six.—G. WINGATE."

Horace Coker breathed hard and deep.

"Any answer, Coker?" grinned Dicky Nugent.

Coker paused.

He did not want another six.

"No!" he said at last.

Nugent minor departed, with entertaining news for the Second.

Coker sat staring at Wingate's note. It seemed that the Greyfriars captain was going to hide behind his dignity as a prefect, and refuse to have the gloves on with Coker. That that was rather a stroke of luck for Horace, only Horace was unaware. Grimmer and grimmer grew his corrugated brow.

"I'll make him!" he said, at last.

"How?" inquired Hilton blandly.

"I don't know yet! But I'll jolly well make him!"

Coker tramped out of the games study thoughtful and grim. He heard, without heeding, the roar of laughter that followed him. Somehow or other he was going to make Wingate of the Sixth "drop the prefect," and put up his hands like a man! His friends could only hope, for his own sake, that he would not succeed.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH tapped Billy Bunter on a fat shoulder in the Rag.

Bunter blinked round irritably at him.

He was worried.

Four times over, Bunter had raised the necessary sum to settle that debt with Bessie. But it booted not. Four times five shillings reposed in Mrs. Mimble's till, gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. A faint hope that his long-expected postal order might turn up had proved delusive; that postal order was still delayed in the post. But the fat Owl had to raise the wind, or face the dire wrath of Eliza-

beth Bunter on Wednesday afternoon. Deep in thought, he was considering whether that chicken would fight again!

No fewer than nine fellows had contributed already. But there were a lot of fellows in the Remove still untouched. The fact that he owed the cash to a "girl at Cliff House" had had a remarkable effect in unloosening purse-strings. So long as the various lenders did not compare notes, it seemed a good prospect to Bunter.

With this problem to think out, he had no use for the Bounder. Smithy had already contributed, and could not be touched again. So he gave Herbert Vernon-Smith an irritated blink.

"Don't bother, Smithy!" he grunted.

"Must!" said the Bounder. "I want to know whether you've settled with that girl at Cliff House you told me about."

Bunter fairly gasped.

The whole thing depended on the various lenders remaining in ignorance of one another's lending, and on fellows who had not yet lent remaining unaware that anybody had. And here was that beast Smithy bringing the whole thing out before the whole Form!

"I want to know," continued the Bounder coolly. "I sprung half-a-crown, and Redwing did the same, to stop you diddling a girl at a girls' school. Have you paid up or not?"

"Oh, really, Smithy—" gasped the wretched Owl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What's that? Mean to say you lent Bunter five bob to square at Cliff House, Smithy?"

"Redwing and I stood half-a-crown each," answered the Bounder, "and I'm jolly well going to see that Bunter squares, too!"

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"But we lent him the five bob!" roared Johnny Bull. "The fat bouncer touched us for a bob each!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter, in dismay.

"He touched me, too!" yelled Peter Todd. "I lent him the whole five bob."

"Great pip!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Bunter, you fat villain, how many fellows did you touch as well as me?"

"You, too, Mauly?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yaas! He said it was a girl at Cliff House, so—"

"You fat spoofer!"

"You pernicious porpoise!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed the Bouncer. "So he raised it four times over! Rolling in it!"

"The rollfulness must be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"So he's raised a quid on it!" said Peter Todd. "You spoofing octopus—"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Shell out!" said Peter. "If you had three five bobs before you touched me, you can do without my lot!"

"And mine!" said Smithy.

"And mine!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, you fellows, it—it's all right!" gasped Bunter. "I'm going to settle with all of you to-morrow. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Shell out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I—I kik-kik-can't! It—it's gone! I—I—I gave it to a pi-pip-poor old blind man!" gasped Bunter. "He was so pip-pip-poor, and so bub-bub-blind, that I—I gave him the lot! I never spent any of it in the tuckshop! Besides, I was going to keep five bob for Bessie, only it went!"

"So we've stood Bunter a feed, and he still owes five bob to that girl at Cliff House," said Redwing laughing.

"Boot him!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" Bunter dodged round the table. "Keep off, you beasts! It's only my sister Bessie,

you know! I'm going to settle on Wednesday, too—I'm expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations, you know! It—it—it's all right!"

"Boot him!"

Billy Bunter dodged for the door. Two or three boots reached him—before he reached the door. A yell floated back as he departed.

The fat Owl was not seen again till he went up to their dormitory.

He was more worried than ever.

Obviously now that all the Remove knew that he had borrowed that five shillings four times over, he could not borrow it again.

And Bessie was coming over for it on Wednesday afternoon.

Unless his postal order turned up in time, it was quite an unpleasant prospect for Bunter.

The following morning he blinked at the letter-rack with unusual eagerness.

But once more his titled relations—if any—had let him down. There was no postal order for Bunter. Not for the first time, William George Bunter realised that the way of the transgressor was hard!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Exit!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned.

On Wednesday afternoon, Billy Bunter did not look bright. On

a sunny summer's afternoon, which was also a half-holiday, most Greyfriars fellows looked as if they were enjoying life. Not so Bunter!

After dinner he rolled out into the quad with a fat, dismal face. He

blinked sorrowfully at the Famous Five, whose grinning faces indicated a total absence of sympathy.

"I say, you might stand by a pal, you know!" urged Bunter. "It's only five

bob! A bob each wouldn't hurt you!"

"Once bitten, twice shy, old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, Bessie will be coming over! You know what girls are—no good talking sense to them, as I've said. Just because she had to pay for that feed at Lantham, she makes out that I owe her five bob! I—I say, suppose she comes over this afternoon—"

"Always pleased to see Miss Bunter," said Nugent, grinning.

"I mean, suppose she smacks my head—"

"More power to her elbow!"

"She said she would!" mumbled Bunter. "I say, I shall have to go out, and stay out of gates all the afternoon, if you fellows don't lend me five bob."

"You won't!" said Johnny Bull. "You're jolly well going to stay in and square Bessie when she comes!"

"How can I, you silly ass, when I haven't got any money!" howled Bunter.

"That's your look-out!" said Johnny grimly. "You diddled us out of it, I know that! I'm not losing sight of you till Bessie comes!"

"Same here!" grinned Bob.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"Why, you—you—you beasts!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "I can jolly well tell you I'm going out now—so yah!"

He rolled off to the gates.

After him walked the Famous Five. They blocked the gateway. Johnny Bull lifted a boot.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "Will you lemme go out or not?"

"Not!" answered Harry Wharton cheerfully. "This is where you get a lesson, you fat spoofer! You're waiting for Bessie!"

"I—I—I say, now I—I come to think of it, I—I promised to go and meet Bessie at Cliff House—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I—I mean, I'm going over to see that chap Courtenay at Highcliffe—"

"Not quite!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the grinning Five with devastating blink. Wingate of the Sixth came down to the gates and glanced at the juniors in passing.

"I—I say, Wingate—" gasped Bunter.

The Greyfriars captain glanced at him.

"I—I say, are—are you going for a walk, Wingate?"

"I'm going over to Pegg if you're fearfully interested, Bunter," answered Wingate, with a stare.

"W-w-would you like me to come?"

Wingate looked at him. For a Remove junior to offer to walk with a Sixth Form man, and that Sixth Form man the captain of the school, was absolutely unheard-of. Wingate could hardly believe his ears.

"Do you want six, Bunter?" he inquired at length.

"Eh? Oh no!"

"Then don't ask for it again."

And Wingate went on his way, and disappeared down Friardale Lane, where he turned into the footpath in the wood, to take the short cut to Pegg.

Billy Bunter breathed hard through his fat little nose.

"I say, you fellows, Bessie may be coming over any minute! I say, I—I—I d-d-don't want to see her—"

"Ladies first!" said Bob. "She wants to see you!"

"If you'll lend me—"

"I'll lend you my boot if you try to get out!"

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's jolly old Coker!" said Bob. "What about

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knocking off his hat? Must do something while we're waiting for Bessie!"

"Oh, give him a rest!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

Horace Coker gave the Removites a stare as he arrived at the gates.

"Wingate gone out?" he asked.

"Eh? Yes. Ten minutes ago."

"Which way did he go?"

"He said he was going to Pegg. But what—"

"Oh, good!" said Coker. "That means that he will take the short cut through the wood. All right!"

Coker, with a glinting eye, marched on. The Famous Five looked at one another. It dawned on them why Coker had made those inquiries.

"Is that silly fathead going after Wingate to hunt for trouble?" asked Bob. "Jevver see a man ask for it like that?"

"Hardly ever!" sighed Nugent.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I think I'd better cut after Coker, and—warn him to come back!" said Billy Bunter. "I—I don't like to see a chap asking for trouble like this! I—I'll go after him—"

"Guess again!" chuckled Bob.

"Look here, you beast, I'm jolly well going out!" roared Bunter. "I'll jolly well punch your cheeky head if you don't let me pass!"

"Help!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you beasts!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, Bessie may come up the road any minute!"

"Good!"

The fat Owl turned away from the gates. In dire peril of Miss Elizabeth Bunter blowing in any minute, he did not want to remain there—and there was no escape for Bunter. He rolled away to the House. After him, grinning, walked the Famous Five.

They did not intend, as a matter of fact, to waste that afternoon on Bunter. Cricket was beginning at Greyfriars, and they were going to be busy on Little Side.

Bob Cherry winked at his chums as they followed the fat Owl of the Remove into the House.

"Don't give him a chance to cut up to his study and lock himself in!" he whispered—a stage whisper that reached Bunter's fat ears.

Bunter scuttled up the stairs.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's going up! After him!"

Bunter flew!

There was a tramp of feet on the staircase behind him. The Famous Five were in pursuit.

Billy Bunter tore across the Remove landing, and pelted up the passage.

"Stop!" roared Johnny Bull, from the landing.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He dived into Study No. 7. The door slammed, and the key turned in the lock. Bunter was safe in cover.

The Famous Five chuckled.

"Now, what about cricket?" grinned Bob. "Bunter seems to have parked himself safe. Bessie can talk to him through the keyhole when she blows in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, chuckling, went down to change for cricket, leaving Billy Bunter safely parked.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wet!

BESSIE BUNTER stopped, and wrinkled her plump brows over his spectacles.

Bessie was annoyed.

Leaving Cliff House School to walk over to Greyfriars that afternoon, Miss

Bunter had naturally picked the shortest cut. She liked walking no more than Brother Billy. The shortest cut lay by way of the plank bridge over the stream in the wood, a tributary of the Sark. It was at the plank bridge that Bessie halted, frowning.

Last term there had been a good, thick strong plank across that stream, firmly planted on stones at the ends. It would have stood the weight of any member of the Bunter clan, or two Bunters together. But that plank had been shifted and washed away, and it had been replaced by a temporary makeshift plank—little more than a board. Most foot passengers could have passed it in safety, but Bessie had doubts. Bessie Bunter was conscious of having a figure—no skinniness about Bessie. Marjorie or Clara could have skipped along that plank with ease. Bessie eyed it uncertainly.

"Brute!" murmured Bessie.

She was thinking of Billy, who owed her five shillings. Only too well Bessie knew that that five shillings would never be collected, unless collected in person. She was going over to Greyfriars to collect it. And here was an unlooked-for obstacle in the path. To go back and go the other way meant more than a mile extra. On a warm day it was really impossible. But she hesitated to trust her weight to that flimsy-looking plank.

A school cap, with the Greyfriars colours, showed up on the opposite side of the stream. A Greyfriars man was coming along.

Bessie fixed her eyes and her spectacles on him as he approached the woodland stream.

As he came nearer she recognised Wingate of the Sixth Form.

Catching sight of her, the Greyfriars captain raised his cap politely.

Bessie favoured him with a smile.

To Greyfriars juniors, George Wingate of the Sixth was a mighty and tremendous personage—captain of the school, head of the games, head prefect—tremendous big gun generally. To the Cliff House girl he was a boy—rather a big boy, certainly—still, simply a boy, something hardly ornamental, but more or less useful at times.

Bessie waved a fat hand, and squeaked:

"Hold that plank for me, will you?"

"Eh—what?" ejaculated Wingate. He stared across the stream.

"I'm coming across," explained Bessie. "It doesn't look safe. Kneel down and hold it with both hands."

Wingate looked at her. As he was wearing white flannel bags, he was not fearfully keen on kneeling down in the mud beside the woodland stream. Spring rains had filled that stream to overflowing, and it was deep and rapid, and washed over the banks. Wet mud was not attractive.

"Look here, you'd better go round, Miss Bunter!" Wingate called across.

"Are you going round?"

"Eh? No! I'm coming across."

"Well, if it will stand you, it will stand me, I suppose," said Bessie. "I don't weigh much."

"Eh?"

"I'm not fat, like Billy."

"Oh!"

"You hold it for me," continued Bessie.

"Look here, it doesn't really look safe for you," urged the Greyfriars captain, "and the water's pretty deep, you know."

"Are you going to hold it? I can't go round or I shall be back late for tea. I'm coming."

Bessie put a foot on the plank. It wobbled a little.

Wingate of the Sixth, breathing hard, bent down to hold it in position. It wobbled again, and he grasped harder. That steadied it.

"Quick!" he called out.

"If you hurry me, I shall fall!" snapped Bessie.

She trod gingerly along the plank. It wobbled more and more, and sank in the middle, yielding under her weight. A wash of water came over it where it touched the stream. There was a startled squeal from Bessie.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Come on!" gasped Wingate.

"I—I think I'll go back!" gasped Bessie.

"For goodness' sake, come on!" exclaimed Wingate, in alarm. "You'll fall—Oh, my hat!"

Turning on the narrow, slippery, swaying plank was a good deal more dangerous than advancing. Bessie slipped.

Splash!

A loud shriek shrilled over Friardale Wood. Bessie made a frantic clutch at the plank, missed, and swept away down the water.

"Oh!" gasped Wingate.

He quite forgot flannel bags and blazer then. With a swift leap, he was in the water, catching Bessie Bunter as she went.

"Ooooooooooogh!" spluttered Bessie frantically. Two plump arms clutched round Wingate's neck. "Ooooooooooogh!"

The Greyfriars captain swam—strongly. But with that dead weight hanging on his neck, it was not easy work. And the current was swift and hard. He swept down the stream, striving in vain to reach the bank. Luckily he grasped at a low branch that hung over the water, and caught hold.

He hung there, panting.

Bessie, clinging like a limpet to a rock, emitted scream after scream.

Grasping the bough with one hand, Wingate held Bessie with the other. For the moment the danger was past. The running water dragged at his legs, striving to drag him away out into the deep waters of the Sark. But he held on.

"Help!" shouted Wingate.

To get out, cumbered by Bessie Bunter, was impossible. To hang on, supporting her weight, was a matter of minutes. Then—He did not like to think of "then."

He shouted for help, in the hope that somebody might hear on the footpath. His deep shouts were accompanied by a series of piercing shrieks from the terrified Bessie.

"Help!"

Shriek!

"Help! Help!"

Shriek!

There was a shout in the distance up the stream. Staring back towards the plank bridge from which he had been swept, Wingate sighted a figure crossing that bridge. He recognised Coker of the Fifth.

"Coker!" he bawled. "Coker! Help!"

Coker shouted back. Having crossed the bridge, he came along the bank, staring about him. Trees and bushes were thick along the bank, and it was impossible to follow the stream close to the water.

Coker disappeared from sight in the thickets.

"Help!" shouted Wingate desperately. "Hurry! Help!"

"I'm coming!" roared back Coker.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,527.

Horace Coker had followed Wingate that afternoon in a war-like mood. But war, for the moment, was banished from his mind. He plunged and scrambled and stumbled along the rugged bank, disappearing and reappearing among the thickets, till at last he reached the tree, to the swaying branch of which the Greyfriars captain hung.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker, staring at him.

"Help!" gasped Wingate. "I can't hold on much longer! For goodness' sake get hold of this kid!"

Shriek, shriek, shriek, from Bessie. Her plump face was white with terror, her eyes almost popping through her glasses. She clung convulsively to Wingate.

Almost exhausted, the Greyfriars captain held on. They were nine or ten feet out from the bank, and the water was deep, the current strong.

Coker did not hesitate. He tramped in, with the water up to his neck, manfully breasting the current.

It would have toppled Coker over, but he got a grip on the slanting branch with his left hand. His right he extended towards Wingate. He was barely able to reach him.

"Now give her to me!" gasped Coker.

Wingate swung Bessie into his reach.

Coker fixed a firm grip on her hair.

"Now let go!" he spluttered. "I've got you!"

Shriek from Bessie.

"For goodness' sake, let go!" panted Wingate. "We shall both be drowned, if you don't!"

Shriek!

Coker pulled. Bessie held on. Perhaps it was lucky that Coker had gripped her by the hair! He had a hefty pull, and resisting that pull was painful. Bessie, involuntarily, let go.

Coker swept her to the bank. Wingate was left hanging on the drooping branch in the middle of the stream. Coker jammed the spluttering Bessie into the rushes, scrambled out, and dragged her up the bank. She sat in a pool of water, still shrieking.

"You're all right now!" gasped Coker. "Look here, you'd better run back to Cliff House as fast as you can, and get dry—"

"Brute!"

"Eh?"

"You pulled my hair!"

"I—I—I couldn't help it!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I—"

"Brute!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Bessie scrambled to her feet, shaking water on all sides. She set her glasses straight, and gave Coker a glare.

"What did you pull my hair for?" she exclaimed wrathfully.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker. "I—I—I say, you're all wet—hadn't you better cut off—"

"Brute!"

Bessie Bunter cut off.

Billy and the five shillings had to be left over now. Miss Elizabeth Bunter ran for it, leaving a watery trail as she went.

Coker was glad to see her disappear.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Knows How!

"O OOOOOOOH!" gasped Wingate. Relieved of Bessie Bunter's weight, the Greyfriars captain was able to get a grip on the drooping branch and struggle along it

to the bank. He dropped there, and lay in the grass, utterly spent.

Coker, drenched to the skin, stood looking down on him.

Wingate panted and panted, in a pool of water.

He sat up at last, leaning back against a tree-trunk. His strength was returning, but he could not get on his legs yet. He blinked up at Coker.

"Thanks!" he said.

"Eh? What for?" asked Coker.

Wingate grinned, a watery grin.

"Goodness knows what would have happened, if you hadn't come in for Bessie," he said. "I couldn't have held on much longer."

"Why didn't you swim out?" asked Coker.

"I couldn't."

"N-no, I suppose not! You're not much of a swimmer! I should have swum out with her!"

Wingate made no reply to that. He had been in danger, but not such danger as Coker. Had Horace lost his footing in the rapid stream, he would have been swept away into the Sark like a log. Coker, if asked how he swam, would have answered, "like a cork!" Any other fellow would have answered that Coker swam like a stone. Wingate, even cumbered with Bessie, would have had a sporting chance. Coker would have had none.

Coker regarded him thoughtfully.

"You look all crumpled up!" he remarked.

"That's how I feel."

"You would!" assented Coker.

"You're pretty soft, in the Sixth, ain't you?"

Again George Wingate refrained from replying.

"Do you know why I came after you this afternoon?" asked Coker.

"Did you?" asked Wingate. "Well, I'm jolly glad you did."

"Yes, I did!" said Coker. "I was going to round you up in this wood, see, where beaks couldn't butt in. Mind, I wasn't going to punch you, as a prefect—I'm not having the Head down on me, talking about bunking a chap. I was going to ask you, as man to man, to drop the prefect, and put up your hands."

"Fathead!"

"If you refused," went on Coker, calmly, "I was going to make you!"

"Oh, my hat! How?" asked Wingate. He was quite interested to hear.

"Easy enough, I think," said Coker. "I was going to pull your nose—"

"Eh?"

"And keep on pulling it till you agreed! See?" explained Coker. "I fancy you'd have got tired in the long run of having your nose pulled. What do you think yourself?"

Wingate gazed at him.

"You think I should have let you?" he inquired.

"I don't see how you'd have prevented me. Nobody here to butt in—no beaks to jump on a fellow," said Coker. "I was going on pulling your nose till you promised, honour bright, to drop the prefect, and fight like a man. Looks to me like a winner."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wingate. "You don't fancy I could have stopped you?"

"Hardly!"

Wingate gurgled.

"You can cackle!" said Coker. "Take your time! I'm not the fellow to handle a man when he's on his beam-ends. Lots of time yet."

Coker leaned back against a tree and

shoved his hands into his pockets—to wait.

Wingate got on his feet at last. He was tired to the bone, and certainly not in a state for war. Also, he was anxious to get back to the school and change his clothes. Above all, he did not want any trouble with Coker, egregious and inoffensive as Coker was. Coker made light of what he had done—but the Greyfriars captain was only too keenly aware of what it was—and that, but for Coker, he might have been, at that very moment, under the waters of the Sark. He had to be very patient with Coker.

"Well, I think I'll be getting back," he said. "Thanks again, Coker."

"Stand where you are!" said Coker calmly. He stepped away from the tree and stood in Wingate's path.

Wingate stopped.

"Let me pass, old man!" he said gently.

"I've told you what I followed you for!" answered Coker. "This chance may not happen again. Take your time—rest all you like! But you're not going."

"Look here—"

"No need for me to tell you all over again, is there?" asked Coker. "Don't be afraid—I'm not going to punch a prefect! I'm going to pull your nose till—"

"You blithering idiot!"

"Jaw, if you like!" said Coker. "You Sixth Form men are pretty good at jawing, though you don't seem able to use your hands much. All I want is your promise to drop the prefect, and stand up with the gloves on. Take a rest, if you think you can stop me, after it. I'll wait."

Wingate eyed him.

He needed a rest. But after a rest, he could have handled Coker, as easily as Coker could have handled Billy Bunter.

That was quite hidden from Coker. Had the great Horace got on with the nose-pulling stunt, he would have had the surprise of his life. What was left of Coker would have had to crawl home on its hands and knees. Unfortunately, Coker did not know that.

"Now, look here, old chap," said Wingate, amicably, "I can't handle you, after what you've done. You know that."

"You can wash that right out!" said Coker. "That doesn't matter."

"But it does!" said Wingate. "But for that, I'd walk you straight back to the school now, and give you six for your cheek!"

Coker laughed.

"Well, if you could do that, you can stop me from pulling your nose," he said banteringly. "Let's hope you could—for the sake of your nose! I'm going on pulling it till you promise, word of honour—"

"Let me pass, you idiot! I shall be catching a cold!"

"So might I, if I were as soft as the Sixth!" jeered Coker. "I'm as wet as you are! Never mind that! Don't take a step, Wingate. I'm willing to wait while you have a rest, but the minute you start, I grab your boko!"

Wingate stood, breathing hard. He was still feeling tired and seedy, but he had recovered sufficiently to handle Coker, if need be. The difficulty was, that in the circumstances, he was very unwilling to handle Coker.

He made a forward step. Up went Coker's hand.

Wingate popped his head back just in time to save his nose.

"You silly fathead!" he roared. "Do you want me to knock you into the middle of next week?"

"Just what I want, if you can do it!" assented Coker. "Why not be a man? Give me your word to stand up with the gloves on—"

"Oh, you blethering ass!" gasped Wingate. "Don't you really know that I could lick you with my arms in a sling?"

"Try it on, then!" grinned Coker. "I keep on telling you that that's all I want. Anyhow, you're not getting away from here till you promise. I'll hold you by your nose till calling-over, if necessary. I fancy you'll get tired before I do."

Wingate glared at him. Coker grinned cheerily. He was, as he had said, backing a winner, in this great stunt—at least, he was assured that he was. Nothing was going to move Coker—except a hefty right-hander from Wingate, which the Greyfriars captain was extremely unwilling to hand over.

"For the last time, Coker—" breathed Wingate.

"Shut up!" said Coker.

"You howling ass—"

"I don't mind waiting!" yawned Coker. "You can try to shove by, if you like, of course! Ha, ha!"

Wingate laughed, too. He could not help it, exasperated as he was. Coker could no more have stopped him than he could have stopped a tank. Coker's sublime ignorance of that fact was funny.

"Well, I'm not going to handle you, Coker, after what you've done," said Wingate at last. "If nothing else will satisfy you, I'll have the gloves on with you in the gym after tea! Now shut up, and let me pass!"

"Done!" said Coker. "You might as well have given in first as last! After all, I don't really think you a funk. You whopped me. Well, I'm going to lick you in a fair fight! That will set it right!"

"Fathead!"

Coker stepped aside, and Wingate got away at last. He tramped back to the school, chiefly anxious for a towel and a change. Coker sauntered after him, with a triumphant grin on his rugged features.

It was all right at last. Having thrashed Wingate in a fair fight, Coker's impaired dignity would be repaired—as good as new, in fact. As for the outcome of the scrap in the gym, Coker had no doubts about that. Like Cæsar of old, he would come, and see, and conquer—"Veni, vidi, vici," over again. With that happy prospect before him, Coker of the Fifth walked back to Greyfriars like a fellow walking on air.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Conqueror!

"I SAY, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bessie come?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? Oh, no! I say, you fellows, Coker—" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, Coker! What about Coker?"

There was a crowd of fellows in the Rag after tea when Billy Bunter burst in, his little round eyes almost bulging through his big round spectacles with excitement.

Harry Wharton & Co., having been busy with cricket, had rather forgotten both Billy and Bessie Bunter. But, as the fat Owl careered into the Rag, they supposed that Miss Bunter had arrived,

and that William George was in flight.

But it was not that. It was news of Coker, and everybody was interested at once.

"I—I say, it's a fight!" gasped Bunter. "Coker—and Wingate—in the gym! I've just heard—"

"Ganmon!" said the Bounder. "As if Wingate would—"

"Coker said he was going to make him!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It's all over the school! Has he made him?"

"I say, you fellows, it's so!" roared Bunter. "I say, Coker's just gone down to the gym with Potter and Greene! Potter and Greene were laughing like anything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Wingate wouldn't—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He jolly well has!" squeaked Bunter. "All the Fifth and the Sixth are going to the gym! I say, Coker will get an awful hiding!"

"Just what he wants!" remarked Nugent.

"I fancy something happened out of gates this afternoon," said Peter Todd. "Wingate and Coker both came in wet to the skin. I saw them."

"What happened, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh—how should I know?"

"Don't you know everything, and a little over?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I never saw them come in! I was in my study till tea-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If this jolly old news is true, I'm going to see Coker prepared for the hospital!" said Vernon-Smith. "Come on!"

"Yes, rather! Poor old Coker!"

There was a rush from the Rag. It was quite exciting news.

All Greyfriars knew that Coker had declared his intention of "making" Wingate drop the prefect, and put up his hands. Nobody had supposed that Coker would succeed, though everybody was prepared to feel sorry for him if he did. Coker had plenty of brawn and tons of pluck, but all Greyfriars knew that Wingate could have made hay of him with one hand. It was quite painful to think of Coker's fate if he stood up to old Wingate's smashing right and left as he was so keen to do.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There they go!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The news had spread. Quite an army of fellows was heading for the gym. Fellows of all Forms were in the throng, most of them grinning. Evidently, a scrap between Wingate of the Sixth and Coker of the Fifth was not looked upon as an awfully serious affair—except by Coker. To the rest of Greyfriars, it seemed something in the nature of a comic entertainment.

The gym was crowded. The Famous Five pushed for front places, and had a view of Coker—already with his jacket off and gloves on. Potter and Greene were giving him their loyal support, though with smiling faces. Old Horace tried their patience severely at times, but they felt bound to stand by him now, and carry home what Wingate left of him.

Coker's face was serious—the only serious face in the throng. Wingate was not yet to be seen, and Coker looked rather impatient.

"He said he would come up to the scratch," said Coker. "He can hardly back out of it now—I mean, he gave his word—see? Naturally, he's not keen on being licked before all the school, but—What are you grinning at, Potter?"

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Potter.

"Sure you'll lick him?" murmured Greene.

"Not much doubt about that, old chap! I'm going all out! Of course, I expect him to put up a fight. I shouldn't care to lick him if he didn't. What are you sniggering at, Greene?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Here, Wharton, you cut off and tell Wingate to get a move on!" called out Coker. "I can't wait all the evening for him!"

"Here he comes!"

Wingate entered the gym with his clum, Gwynne.

There was a buzz as he came up to the ring where Coker stood, impatiently waiting.

Gwynne was grinning. But Wingate had rather a worried expression on his face. He did not seem to like the task before him.

"Oh, here you are!" snorted Coker.

"Yes, here I am, Coker!" said the Greyfriars captain. "Now, look here, old chap, what about calling it off?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Coker.

"I don't want to punch you after what

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you did for me this afternoon," said Wingate. "I'd really rather not, Coker."

"You can chuck that!" said Coker. "I lent you a hand in the water, as any fellow would have done. That's got nothing to do with it."

"It has, rather," said Wingate. "I might have been drowned, with that silly kid clinging on my neck, if you hadn't helped. And after that, Coker, I don't want to punch you—see? Let's call it off."

"I'm ready when you are!" said Coker.

"Oh, all right!" sighed Wingate. He threw off his coat and accepted the gloves from Gwynne.

There was a buzz of excitement in the gym. Wingate's words had rather enlightened the Greyfriars fellows as to why he had consented to that scrap, and as to his obvious unwillingness to get on with it.

But it had to be got on with. Coker was adamant. There was no denying Coker. Coker had been whopped. His dignity had to be renovated equal to new, and there was only one way—licking Wingate in a fight!

Gwynne took his watch to keep time. Nobody expected the fight to last longer than one round—excepting Coker. Coker thought Wingate might be good for three or four rounds; himself for three or four dozen, if needed.

"Time!"

Coker came on with a terrific onslaught. He heeded not the chuckle that ran round the crowded ring. Coker's tactics were those of a bull dealing with a gate. He left himself open to as many knocks as his adversary chose to put in. Even a poor boxer could have dodged Coker's flail-like swipes, and put in the k.o. And Wingate was the best boxer in the school. Coker was asking for it.

Bump!

Coker was sitting down. He sat down in a state of great astonishment. He had received a rather severe jolt. He hardly knew where it had come from. But he knew that he had received it, for there he was, sitting down, blinking.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sitting this one out, Coker?" yelled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker staggered up. His face was red, his eyes ablaze. His jaw was set like a vice. The fighting blood of the Cokers was up, and on the boil. Coker came on like a tiger.

The chuckling died away. Everybody could see that Wingate did not want to hurt old Horace. But that berserker attack left him no chance, unless he was to go down under it. He had to hit, and hit hard, or take his gruel. Coker was not merely asking for it; he was demanding it, and leaving his opponent no choice but to hand it out, or—

Bump!

Wingate was down!

There was a roar of surprise. It was followed by a roar of laughter. Coker, panting, stared round. He could see no occasion for laughter. He had fully expected Wingate to go down before that onslaught. Wingate had gone down. What was there to laugh at?

"Time!"

Coker smiled as he sat in his corner. "I fancy I've got him beat—what?" he remarked.

Potter and Greene sniggered, Coker did not know why.

"Time!"

The second round began. In that round, Coker drove Wingate all round the ring. It finished with Wingate sitting down again.

Coker's face glowed with exertion and triumph.

Why everybody was howling with laughter, Coker could not guess. He could not see what everybody else saw, that Wingate could have knocked him out, at any moment he chose; and that he had, indeed, considerable difficulty in avoiding knocking him out.

The Greyfriars captain was exerting his skill, not to lick Coker, but to prevent Coker from rushing on destruction. It was not exactly his intention to "guy" Coker, but he was determined not to punch him, and that was that!

But to all the onlookers, it seemed amazing that old Horace could not see that Wingate was playing with him like a baby. But old Horace saw

out, Wingate, rose to his feet very easily. He peeled off the gloves.

Coker gave him a breathless grin. Coker's efforts had rather deprived him of wind. He threw off his gloves, and extended the right hand of fellowship to Wingate. Coker could be generous to a beaten foe!

"Jolly good fight, old man!" said Coker. "You couldn't expect to pull it off, but I'll say this, you put up a good scrap. No malice—what?"

"None at all!" assured Wingate.

"I like a man who can take a licking!" said Coker.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" gasped Wingate.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared round.

"Look here, shut up that cackling!" he exclaimed. "Wingate's put up a jolly good scrap, and there's nothing to laugh at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars fellows. Even yet it had not dawned on Coker that he was the object of the merriment.

Coker walked out of the gym between Potter and Greene. They winked at one another behind Coker's fat head. The crowd was left yelling.

"Look here, you men!" said Coker, at prep that evening.

Coker was looking serious and thoughtful.

Potter and Greene were suppressing smiles.

"Look here," went on Coker, "now I've licked Wingate—"

Potter and Greene gurgled.

"Now I've licked him, the trouble's over," said Coker. "He whopped me, and I've licked him, man to man, and that squares the account. He's not a bad chap—a bit of a fool, perhaps, and he can't box; but not a bad chap at all. We can't all be brainy, and we can't all be first-class boxers. It was rotten bad form, if you ask me, for the fellows to cackle as they did, when he took his licking. He did his best! No man can do more!"

Coker paused.

"Now I've licked him," he went on, "I'm satisfied, and I hope he is! It clears the air! I'm not the man to rub it in. No crowing about me, I hope. I'm going to make it a point to be jolly civil to Wingate, see—now I've licked him! What the dickens are you fellows gurgling about?"

Potter and Greene did not explain what they were gurgling about. They just gurgled.

When Coker went down after prep, a grinning crowd met him in Hall.

"See the conquering hero comes!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker the Conqueror!" chortled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker smiled cheerily.

THE END.

(There's an extra-special treat in store for you next week, chums—the first of a grand new series of yarns featuring Harry Wharton & Co. and Marjorie Hazelden & Co., of Cliff House, entitled "THE FEUD WITH CLIFF HOUSE!" Take my tip and order your copy of the MAGNET in good time!—ED.)

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nothing—except triumph and glory, and the kudos of a conqueror!

Third round, and fourth, and fifth, and the yells of laughter from the gym woke all the echoes of Greyfriars.

Once or twice Wingate gave Coker a tap, just to keep up appearances, as it were. Otherwise, Coker had it all his own way.

Wingate, it was true, did not show much sign of damage. He did not carry his forbearance so far as to let Coker's hefty drives land on him. But he gave ground all the time, and sat down at frequent intervals. In the fifth round he sat tight—and Gwynne counted, though he was laughing almost too much to count.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—"

Coker panted, and waited.

"OUT!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Considering that he had been counted

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THE HERO OF THE FAIR!

By DICKY NUGENT

"It can't be done!"
"But look here, Burleigh—"

"It can't be done!" repeated Burleigh of the Sixth, the mitey kaptin of St. Sam's, in tones of finality. "It would be more than my life's worth to give you a pass-out to go to the fair!"

Jack Jolly & Co. frowned. They had been looking forward to the Muggleton Whitsun Fair with boyish enthusiasm. It seemed a bit thick now to find their hoops vanishing into thin air. It would have been different if they had been members of the St. Sam's circle of blades. But Jack Jolly & Co. were by no means blades—so they looked daggers at Burleigh.

"Doctor Birchmell has always let us go in previous years, Burleigh," said Jolly. "Why not this year?"

"Ask me another!" grinned the kaptin of St. Sam's. "The fact remains that the Head has laid down the law—and the Head's laws are like the laws of the Swedes and Persians!"

"Well, if you can't give us a pass, you can't!" said Jolly, with a sigh. "Come on, you fellows!"

The kaptin of the Fourth quitted Burleigh's study, followed by Merry and Bright and Fearless. Outside, the juniors looked at

each other with very doleful eggspessions on their faces.

"Are we going to take this lying down?" demanded Fearless.

"No fear!" said Bright. "Let's stand up for our rights!"

Jack Jolly rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"That's what I think myself," he said. "Of course, it's risky. You know what a terribul tirant the Head is. If he finds out we've been to the fair in defiance of his orders, he'll birch us black and blue!"

"It won't be the first time!" said Fearless, with a larf. "I vote we go to the fair, anyway—and blow the Head!"

"Hear, hear!"
"All serene, then—we'll go!" grinned Jack Jolly.

The chums of the Fourth, their minds made up, trotted off, chattering cheerily at the prospect of a visit to a fair.

They mite not have been so cheery about it, however, had they noticed that Toadey minor of the Fourth had been skulking in the background and had heard every word they said.

Toadey minor's shifty eyes were gleaming, as he watched them vanish down the stairs.

"My hat! Here's a



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 241.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

May 22nd, 1937.



SHOULD WE FINISH WITH FAGGING?

H. VERNON-SMITH says "YES!"

We in the Remove neither fag nor are fagged. We're beyond the stage when we do washing-up and tea-browsing for our elders, and we haven't reached the stage when we have it done for us by our juniors.

For that reason, the fagging question doesn't directly concern me. But I don't mind giving readers my opinion. It is that fagging is utter rot!

Why the dickens should kids who come here to learn schoolwork and games, spend half their time making toast and cleaning up studies? The traditional answer is that it teaches them all kinds of moral lessons. That's just humbug!

Fagging started, in the first place, because schools were too poor to afford servants. Greyfriars is not poor, and there are quite enough servants to do all the work. Fagging at Greyfriars is, therefore, an idiotic survival devoid of all sense and meaning.

HARRY WHARTON SAYS "NO!"

If the case against fagging were as overwhelming as Smithy makes it out to be, I'd be the first to vote for its abolition.

But there's more in it than Smithy says. It may, as he suggests, have originated in money shortage. That's beside the point. It survives because it has justified itself on other grounds.

I admit that I was one of those who went on strike against fagging and got the Remove excused from it. But I can see now that it's not a bad thing for a youngster.

Most kids come to Greyfriars from a prep. school, full of self-importance. Fagging knocks that out of them, and it's a good job it does!

Another good thing about it is that it establishes a link between juniors and seniors that wouldn't otherwise exist. Fagging is not half such a one-sided arrangement as some people think. Nearly all fagmasters help their fags with their prep., and most are only too anxious to help whenever the kid needs an older fellow's help or advice.

Apart from all this, fagging is one of those unique things which, silly as they may seem in themselves, go to make public schools the first-rate places for the training of character which most people admit they are.

So long live fagging—for all Forms below the Remove, of course!

I KILLED THIRD FORMER'S THIRST FOR THRILLS!

Boasts LORD MAULEVERER

Young Tubb's thirst for thrills has always disturbed me.

A chappie expects Third Form kids to get into mischief, begad; but Tubb was enough to make a man's hair stand up on end.

On the first day of the term he got up on to the roof of the School House, and climbed to the top of the flagpost. Strong men turned white at the sight—honour bright!

He celebrated the opening of the swimming season by doing a dive under a boat in the river and getting tangled up with some weeds. Wharton and I had the job of disentangling him—and it was no joke, dear men, believe me!

Later, he achieved further notoriety by borrowing Coker's motor-bike without Coker's permission, and knocking Bunter down in the quad. Everybody wants Bunter got out of the way, of course; but nobody wants him got out of the way in that manner!

Young Tubb went from bad to worse. I could see

him meeting a horrid fate if something wasn't done.

As one who takes a fatherly interest in fags, I felt it was up to me to do something.

So I sent for him and asked the young beggar if he'd like a real thrill—a thrill he could look back on all his life!

Tubb said he would.

"Then, dear man, you shall have it," I said. "Trot along to Hilton of the Fifth and ask him if he'll kindly let me have the fiver he borrowed from me last term."

Tubb grinned deviously. He said something about calling that a thrill? Yah!

But I gently insisted, and in the end the young blighter went off to interview Hilton.

Though I felt badly in need of a snooze just then, I followed him and waited at the end of the Fifth Form passage.

I saw him go into Hilton's study and heard half a dozen words spoken.

Then the door opened with frightful suddenness, and an assortment of arms, legs, ears, and other parts of the human body fell all over the passage. Eventually they sorted themselves out, and stood up in the shape of Tubb.



"Glad I've run into you, dear man," I grinned. "I followed you up because it struck me that if this wasn't thrilling enough for you I can suggest several more that—"

But there was no need for me to finish.

Tubb had fled—having apparently had all the thrills he wanted for some time!

very reason I've stopped them!"

"Bless my sole!" Doctor Birchmell sank his voice to a confidential whisper.

"The fact is, Lickham, I feel like spending some of my winnings on the swings and roundabouts—and I don't want any of the boys to see me! Well, Toadey minor!"

he bellowed, as he suddenly spotted the sneak of the Fourth. "Why are you standing there with your mouth open like a codfish? What do you think you're doing?"

"Oh! Sorry, sir!" gasped Toadey. "I only called as a matter of dewty, sir, to report a serious matter that has just reached my ears!"

Then Toadey hurriedly proceeded to relate what he had heard in the Sixth passage.

Doctor Birchmell's eggspression became simply terrifying, as he listened.

"Blow me tight!" he cried, as the sneak of the Fourth concluded. "They have actually had the dis-pertinence to go to the fair despite Burleigh's orders? Why, I'll slawter 'em! I'll spifficate 'em! I'll—"

"Please, sir, you'd better hurry up!" wined Toadey. "Jolly and his pals are hot stuff at walking. They'll leave an old fogey like you stone cold!"

"Take a thousand lines for calling me an old fogey! And in future call me 'old gentleman' or 'old buffer'!" wrapped up the Head.

"See you later, Lickham!" With these words, Doctor Birchmell jammed on his mortar-board and bounced out of the study—fairly bristling with rage, as he brushed past the trembling sneak of the Fourth!

Meanwhile, Jack Jolly & Co. were on their way to the fair at the dubble.

They arrived there several minnits before Doctor Birchmell and at once plunged into the giddy round of mirth and plezzure provided for the patrons of the fair-ground. They had a go on the helter-skelter and a game of hoop-la and tried their skill at a shooting gallery. Then Jack Jolly and Merry went up in a swing, while their pals stood watching below.

Jolly and Merry pulled the ropes with all their mite and swung higher and higher till

it really seemed a marvel that they didn't go "ght over the top.

And then, suddenly, Merry uttered a cry.

"The Head! Look!" Jolly craned his neck round. A low wisk of ser-prize escaped him, as he saw what was happening in the field at the back of the fair-ground.

Standing in the middle of the field, which was a short cut to St. Sam's, was Doctor Birchmell. Facing him was a scowling gipsy, holding a merderous-looking mfo in his grimy hand!

It was a hold-up!

The swing whizzed downwards again and for a moment Jack Jolly saw nothing.

But already he had seen enough. Already, his mind was made up!

It was common mullidge at St. Sam's that Doctor Birchmell had five pounds in a cross-wad con-test and Jolly felt sure that the munny would be re-posing in the Head's trowsis pocket. Unless something was done immediately, the fiver would be changing hands and it would be too late!

It was a time for swift action—and Jolly acted!

As the swing swung up again, he let go of his rope, wheeled round, and then nelt on the seat.

The next moment the swing reached the top, he calmly allowed himself to be herled into the air!

Many times before, Jack Jolly had been described as square. Now, he described a semi-circle!

Plonk!

He landed right on the back of the would-be thief.

It was a beautifully-timed dive. He flew through the air with the grate ease and brought down the crook, with a howl, to his neeze!

"Yarooooo!"

"Take that, you scoundrell!" panted Jack Jolly. "Ah! Would you?" he added, gripping the gipsy's wrist, as he made a desprit lunge at his hart with a fofe.

The weppon dropped from the man's nerveless hand, harmlessly peering the Head's shoe and cutting his pet corn for him.

"Gotcher!" cried the Head, as he triantly seazed the nife and snatched it in the face of the footpad.

"Now you'll just stay still till the perlice arrive—unless

you want to be properly carved up!"

The perlice soon turned up—brought to the seen by Merry, who had quickly jumped down from the swing after his leader's flight.

In the meantime, Bright and Fearless had had their attention taken off the swing by the uneggspected arrival of Mr. Lickham.

The master of the Fourth was puffing and blowing as though he had been running.

the Head. "There's nothing like a fair, if you feel like having a bit of fun! It's a real plezzure, running into you boys!"

"But I thought you said you weren't going to allow the boys anywhere near the fair, sir?" yelled Mr. Lickham, in amazement.

Doctor Birchmell scoffed. "Ahem! I may have said something like that, Lickham; but you can take it from me, it was only said on the spur of the moment,"

Jolly—nor his friends!" beamed the Head. "Let's forget it, chaps, and have a rattling good time on the swings and roundabouts—at my eggspense! Hay, ho, come to the fair!"

With these words, Doctor Birchmell led the way to the amowsements.

And Mr. Lickham and Jack Jolly & Co., feeling that it was the jolliest possibl end to the bizziness, winked at each other and followed him!

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FAGS IN REVOLT!

We learn that the Second are very indignant about the Head's new order that they mustn't carry matches in their pockets.

They're thinking of going on "strike" about it!

CARDSHARPER'S PLEA FALLS FLAT!

Judge's Stern Words.

Swift justice was meted out to a cardsharp at the Woodshed Sessions on Monday last.

Harold Skinner, described as a wastrel, was charged with obtaining 3s. 4½d. from Mr. William George Bunter, by means of a game of ha'penny nap, played with cards which Skinner had previously marked.

Opening the case for the police, Mr. Peter Todd, K.C., stated that on the morning of the alleged offence, Mr. Bunter had "touched" Lord Mauleverer for five shillings.

He then went on to relate how Mr. Bunter, on his way to the tuck-shop, had fallen in with two shady characters named Snoop and Stott. Snoop and Stott, who

he said, giving Mr. Lickham a dig in the ribs. "As a matter of fact, Jolly, here, has just saved me from a feroshus footpad who was after that fiver I won in the crossword contest."

"Oh!" grinned Mr. Lickham and Fearless and Bright.

"I wouldn't dream of placing the fairground out of bounds to a lad like

"Quick—I've come to warn you boys!" he gasped. "Where are Jolly and Merry?"

"Up in the swing, sir—well, I'm jiggered! They've both gone!" eggclaimed Frank Fearless, as he glanced at the swing—now empty.

"Find them at once, then—and take my tip and go!" said Mr. Lickham. "Toadey minor has split on you, boys. And heven help you if the Head finds you here!"

"Oh, crums!"

Fearless and Bright looked dismayed. Brave as they were, their cheeks blanched for a moment at the prospect of being caught by the Head defying his ban on the Muggleton Fair!

A moment later, they felt still more dismayed. Walking towards them, they saw Jolly and Merry—with the Head marching between them!

"That's done it!" groaned Fearless and Bright together.

But a serprize was in store for the two Fourth Formers. When the Head stopped, he was not looking a bit annoyed. On the contrary, he was grinning.

"What cheer, Lickham?" he cried. "How-do, boys?"

"Eh?"

"W-w-what did you say, sir?"

"It's ripping, us all meet-ing like this here!" beamed

anything to say before I pass sentence?"

Prisoner (warmly): "I should jolly well think I have! The fact is, I only did it for Bunter's own good."

Mr. Justice Brown: "Wh-a-at?"

Prisoner: "Fact! I knew that if he didn't lose the money he'd gorgo himself till he burst. So I tried to make him lose the money—for his own sake!"

Mr. Justice Brown: "Chuck it, Skinner—for goodness' sake! The truth about it is, you're just a cardsharp—and so far as I'm concerned, your plea falls completely flat! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself. But just in case you're not, I'm going to sentence you to be boiled in oil, keelhailed, and hung, drawn and quartered!"

The sentence was afterwards commuted to a severe scragging and a fine of 3s. 6d. The sum of 3s. 4½d. was awarded to Mr. Bunter, who left the Court at the double, and made a bee-line for the tuck-shop.